



PS
2510
F06
v.11

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



Cornell University Library

PS 2510.F06

v.11

The novels, stories, sketches, and poems



3 1924 022 025 427

olin



Cornell University
Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924022025427>

PLANTATION

EDITION



VOLUME XI



Over Evelyn he bent silently.

(PAGE 212)

✦ THE NOVELS, STORIES,
SKETCHES AND POEMS OF
THOMAS NELSON PAGE ✦

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES
AMONG THE CAMPS
TWO PRISONERS

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK, ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ 1906

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

Copyright, 1888, by
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

AMONG THE CAMPS

Copyright, 1891, by
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

TWO PRISONERS

Copyright, 1898, by
ROBERT HOWARD RUSSELL
Copyright, 1903, by
HARPER & BROTHERS

Copyright, 1906, by
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

All Rights Reserved

B543296
A

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES	3
AMONG THE CAMPS	
A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS	173
KITTYKIN, AND THE PART SHE PLAYED IN THE WAR .	217
"NANCY PANSY"	243
"JACK AND JAKE"	296
TWO PRISONERS	353

ILLUSTRATIONS

"OVER EVELYN HE BENT SILENTLY"	Frontispiece
Drawn by W. L. Jacobs	
	FACING PAGE
"'I'M IN COMMAND,' SAID THE GENTLEMAN, SMILING AT HIM OVER THE TOWEL"	20
Drawn by A. C. Redwood	
THE MAJOR'S CHRISTMAS PRESENTS	162
Drawn by W. L. Jacobs	

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

TO MY MOTHER

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

I

THE "Two Little Confederates" lived at Oakland. It was not a handsome place, as modern ideas go, but down in Old Virginia, where the standard was different from the later one, it passed in old times as one of the best plantations in all that region. The boys thought it the greatest place in the world, of course excepting Richmond, where they had been one year to the fair, and had seen a man pull fire out of his mouth, and do other wonderful things. It was quite secluded. It lay, it is true, right between two of the county roads, the Court-house Road being on one side, and on the other the great "Mountain Road," down which the large covered wagons with six horses and jingling bells used to go; but the lodge lay this side of the one, and "the big woods," where the boys shot squirrels, and hunted 'possums

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

and coons, and which reached to the edge of "Holetown," stretched between the house and the other, so that the big gate-post where the semi-weekly mail was left by the mail-rider each Tuesday and Friday afternoon was a long walk, even by the near cut through the woods. The railroad was ten miles away by the road. There was a nearer way, only about half the distance, by which the negroes used to walk, and which during the war, after all the horses were gone, the boys, too, learned to travel; but before that, the road by Trinity Church and Honeyman's Bridge was the only route, and the other was simply a dim bridle-path, and the "horseshoe-ford" was known to the initiated alone.

The mansion itself was known on the plantation as "the great-house," to distinguish it from all the other houses on the place, of which there were many. It had as many wings as the angels in the vision of Ezekiel.

These additions had been made, some in one generation, some in another, as the size of the family required; and finally, when there was no side of the original structure to which another wing could be joined, a separate building had been erected on the edge of the yard which was called "The Office," and was used as such, as

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

well as for a lodging-place by the young men of the family. The privilege of sleeping in the Office was highly esteemed, for, like the *toga virilis*, it marked the entrance upon manhood of the youths who were fortunate enough to enjoy it. There smoking was admissible, there the guns were kept in the corner, and there the dogs were allowed to sleep at the feet of their young masters, or in bed with them, if they preferred it.

In one of the rooms in this building the boys went to school whilst small, and another they looked forward to having as their own when they should be old enough to be elevated to the coveted dignity of sleeping in the Office. Hugh already slept there, and gave himself airs in proportion; but Hugh they regarded as a very aged person; not as old, it was true, as their cousins who came down from college at Christmas, and who, at the first outbreak of war, all rushed into the army; but each of these was in the boys' eyes a Methuselah. Hugh had his own horse and the double-barrelled gun, and when a fellow got those there was little material difference between him and other men, even if he did have to go to the academy,—which was really something like going to school.

The boys were Frank and Willy; Frank being

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

the eldest. They went by several names on the place. Their mother called them her "little men," with much pride; Uncle Balla spoke of them as "them chillern," which generally implied something of reproach; and Lucy Ann, who had been taken into the house to "run after" them when they were little boys, always coupled their names as "Frank 'n' Willy." Peter and Cole did the same when their mistress was not by.

When there first began to be talk at Oakland about the war, the boys thought it would be a dreadful thing; their principal ideas about war being formed from an intimate acquaintance with the Bible and its accounts of the wars of the Children of Israel, in which men, women and children were invariably put to the sword. This gave a vivid conception of its horrors.

One evening, in the midst of a discussion about the approaching crisis, Willy astonished the company, who were discussing the merits of probable leaders of the Union armies, by suddenly announcing that he 'd "bet they did n't have any general who could beat Joab."

Up to the time of the war, the boys had led a very uneventful, but a very pleasant life. They used to go hunting with Hugh, their older

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

brother, when he would let them go, and after the cows with Peter and Cole. Old Balla, the driver, was their boon comrade and adviser, and taught them to make whips, and traps for hares and birds, as he had taught them to ride and to cobble shoes.

He lived alone (for his wife had been set free years before, and lived in Philadelphia). His room over "the old kitchen" was the boys' play-room when he would permit them to come in. There were so many odds and ends in it that it was a delightful place.

Then the boys played blindman's-buff in the house, or hide-and-seek about the yard or garden, or upstairs in their den, a narrow alcove at the top of the house.

The little willow-shadowed creek, that ran through the meadow behind the barn, was one of their haunts. They fished in it for minnows and little perch; they made dams and bathed in it; and sometimes they played pirates upon its waters.

Once they made an extended search up and down its banks for any fragments of Pharaoh's chariots which might have been washed up so high; but that was when they were younger and did not have much sense.

II

THERE was great excitement at Oakland during the John Brown raid, and the boys' grandmother used to pray for him and Cook, whose pictures were in the papers.

The boys became soldiers, and drilled punctiliously with guns which they got Uncle Balla to make for them. Frank was the captain, Willy the first lieutenant, and a dozen or more little negroes composed the rank and file, Peter and Cole being trusted file-closers.

A little later they found their sympathies all on the side of peace and the preservation of the Union. Their uncle was for keeping the Union unbroken, and ran for the Convention against Colonel Richards, who was the chief officer of the militia in the county, and was as blood-thirsty as Tamerlane, who reared the pyramid of skulls, and as hungry for military renown as the great Napoleon, about whom the boys had read.

There was immense excitement in the county

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

over the election. Though the boys' mother had made them add to their prayers a petition that their Uncle William might win, and that he might secure the blessings of peace; and though at family prayers, night and morning, the same petition was presented, the boys' uncle was beaten at the polls by a large majority. And then they knew there was bound to be war, and that it must be very wicked. They almost felt the "invader's heel," and the invaders were invariably spoken of as "cruel," and the heel was described as of "iron," and was always mentioned as engaged in the act of crushing. They would have been terribly alarmed at this cruel invasion had they not been reassured by the general belief of the community that one Southerner could whip ten Yankees, and that, collectively, the South could drive back the North with popguns. When the war actually broke out, the boys were the most enthusiastic of rebels, and the troops in Camp Lee did not drill more continuously nor industriously.

Their father, who had been a Whig and opposed secession until the very last, on Virginia's seceding, finally cast his lot with his people, and joined an infantry company; and Uncle William raised and equipped an artillery company, of

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

which he was chosen captain; but the infantry was too tame and the artillery too ponderous to suit the boys.

They were taken to see the drill of the county troop of cavalry, with its prancing horses and clanging sabres. It was commanded by a cousin; and from that moment they were cavalrymen to the core. They flung away their stick-guns in disgust; and Uncle Balla spent two grumbling days fashioning them a stableful of horses with real heads and "sure 'nough" leather bridles.

Once, indeed, a secret attempt was made to utilize the horses and mules which were running in the back pasture; but a premature discovery of the matter ended in such disaster to all concerned that the plan was abandoned, and the boys had to content themselves with their wooden steeds.

The day that the final orders came for their father and uncle to go to Richmond,—from which point they were ordered to "the Peninsula,"—the boys could not understand why every one was suddenly plunged into such distress. Then, next morning, when the soldiers left, the boys could not altogether comprehend it. They thought it was a very fine thing to be

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

allowed to ride Frank and Hun, the two war-horses, with their new, deep army saddles and long bits. They cried when their father and uncle said good-bye, and went away; but it was because their mother looked so pale and ill, and not because they did not think it was all grand. They had no doubt that all would come back soon, for old Uncle Billy, the "head-man," who had been born down in "Little York," where Cornwallis surrendered, had expressed the sentiment of the whole plantation when he declared, as he sat in the back yard surrounded by an admiring throng, and surveyed with pride the two glittering sabres which he had allowed no one but himself to polish, that "Ef them Britishers jest sees dese swodes dee 'll run!" The boys tried to explain to him that these were not British, but Yankees,—but he was hard to convince. Even Lucy Ann, who was incurably afraid of everything like a gun or fire-arm, partook of the general fervor, and boasted effusively that she had actually "tetched Marse John's big pistils."

Hugh, who was fifteen, and was permitted to accompany his father to Richmond, was regarded by the boys with a feeling of mingled envy and veneration, which he accepted with dignified complacency.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

Frank and Willy soon found that war brought some immunities. The house filled up so with the families of cousins and friends who were refugees that the boys were obliged to sleep in the Office, and thus they felt that, at a bound, they were almost as old as Hugh.

There were the cousins from Gloucester, from the Valley, and families of relatives from Baltimore and New York, who had come south on the declaration of war. Their favorite was their Cousin Belle, whose beauty at once captivated both boys. This was the first time that the boys knew anything of girls, except their own sister, Evelyn; and after a brief period, during which the novelty gave them pleasure, the inability of the girls to hunt, climb trees, or play knucks, etc., and the additional restraint which their presence imposed, caused them to hold the opinion that "girls were no good."

III

IN course of time they saw a great deal of "the army,"—which meant the Confederates. The idea that the Yankees could ever get to Oakland never entered any one's head. It was understood that the army lay between Oakland and them, and surely they could never get by the innumerable soldiers who were always passing up one road or the other, and who, day after day and night after night, were coming to be fed, and were rapidly eating up everything that had been left on the place. By the end of the first year they had been coming so long that they made scarcely any difference; but the first time a regiment camped in the neighborhood it created great excitement.

It became known one night that a calvary regiment, in which were several of their cousins, was encamped at Honeyman's Bridge, and the boys' mother determined to send a supply of provisions for the camp next morning; so several sheep were killed, the smoke-house was

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

opened, and all night long the great fires in the kitchen and wash-house glowed; and even then there was not room, so that a big fire was kindled in the back yard, beside which saddles of mutton were roasted in the tin kitchens. Everybody was "rushing."

The boys were told that they might go to see the soldiers, and as they had to get off long before daylight, they went to bed early, and left all "the other boys"—that is, Peter and Cole and other colored children—squatting about the fires and trying to help the cooks to pile on wood.

It was hard to leave the exciting scene.

They were very sleepy the next morning; indeed, they seemed scarcely to have fallen asleep when Lucy Ann shook them; but they jumped up without the usual application of cold water in their faces, which Lucy Ann so delighted to make; and in a little while they were out in the yard, where Balla was standing holding three horses,—their mother's riding-horse; another with a side-saddle for their Cousin Belle, whose brother was in the regiment; and one for himself,—and Peter and Cole were holding the carriage-horses for the boys, and several other men were holding mules.

Great hampers covered with white napkins

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

were on the porch, and the savory smell decided the boys not to eat their breakfast, but to wait and take their share with the soldiers.

The roads were so bad that the carriage could not go; and as the boys' mother wished to get the provisions to the soldiers before they broke camp, they had to set out at once. In a few minutes they were all in the saddle, the boys and their mother and Cousin Belle in front, and Balla and the other servants following close behind, each holding before him a hamper, which looked queer and shadowy as they rode on in the darkness.

The sky, which was filled with stars when they set out, grew white as they splashed along mile after mile through the mud. Then the road became clearer; they could see into the woods, and the sky changed to a rich pink, like the color of peach-blossoms. Their horses were covered with mud up to the saddle-skirts. They turned into a lane only half a mile from the bridge, and, suddenly, a bugle rang out down in the wooded bottom below them, and the boys hardly could be kept from putting their horses to a run, so fearful were they that the soldiers were leaving, and that they should not see them. Their mother, however, told them that this was probably the

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

reveille, or "rising-bell," of the soldiers. She rode on at a good sharp canter, and the boys were diverting themselves over a discussion as to who would act the part of Lucy Ann in waking the regiment of soldiers, when they turned a curve, and at the end of the road, a few hundred yards ahead, stood several horsemen.

"There they are," exclaimed both boys.

"No, that is a picket," said their mother; "gallop on, Frank, and tell them we are bringing breakfast for the regiment."

Frank dashed ahead, and soon they saw a soldier ride forward to meet him, and, after a few words, return with him to his comrades. Then, while they were still a hundred yards distant, they saw Frank, who had received some directions, start off again toward the bridge, at a hard gallop. The picket had told him to go straight on down the hill, and he would find the camp just the other side of the bridge. He accordingly rode on, feeling very important at being allowed to go alone to the camp on such a mission.

As he reached a turn in the road, just above the river, the whole regiment lay swarming below him among the large trees on the bank of the little stream. The horses were picketed to

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

bushes and stakes, in long rows, the saddles lying on the ground, not far off; and hundreds of men were moving about, some in full uniform and others without coat or vest. A half-dozen wagons with sheets on them stood on one side among the trees, near which several fires were smoking, with men around them.

As Frank clattered up to the bridge, a soldier with a gun on his arm, who had been standing by the railing, walked out to the middle of the bridge.

"Halt! Where are you going in such a hurry, my young man?" he said.

"I wish to see the colonel," said Frank, repeating as nearly as he could the words the picket had told him.

"What do you want with him?"

Frank was tempted not to tell him; but he was so impatient to deliver his message before the others should arrive, that he told him what he had come for.

"There he is," said the sentinel, pointing to a place among the trees where stood at least five hundred men.

Frank looked, expecting to recognize the colonel by his noble bearing, or splendid uniform, or some striking marks.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Where?” he asked, in doubt; for while a number of the men were in uniform, he knew these to be privates.

“There,” said the sentry, pointing; “by that stump, near the yellow horse-blanket.”

Frank looked again. The only man he could fix upon by the description was a young fellow, washing his face in a tin basin, and he felt that this could not be the colonel; but he did not like to appear dull, so he thanked the man and rode on, thinking he would go to the point indicated, and ask some one else to show him the officer.

He felt quite grand as he rode in among the men, who, he thought, would recognize his importance and treat him accordingly; but, as he passed on, instead of paying him the respect he had expected, they began to guy him with all sorts of questions.

“Hullo, bud, going to jine the cavalry?” asked one. “Which is oldest; you or your horse?” inquired another.

“How’s pa—and ma?” “Does your mother know you ’re out?” asked others. One soldier walked up, and putting his hand on the bridle, proceeded affably to ask him after his health, and that of every member of his family. At first Frank did not understand that they were mak-

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

ing fun of him, but it dawned on him when the man asked him solemnly:

“Are there any Yankees around, that you were running away so fast just now?”

“No; if there were I ’d never have found *you* here,” said Frank, shortly, in reply; which at once turned the tide in his favor and diverted the ridicule from himself to his teaser, who was seized by some of his comrades and carried off with much laughter and slapping on the back.

“I wish to see Colonel Marshall,” said Frank, pushing his way through the group that surrounded him, and riding up to the man who was still occupied at the basin on the stump.

“All right, sir, I ’m the man,” said the individual, cheerily looking up with his face dripping and rosy from its recent scrubbing.

“You the colonel!” exclaimed Frank, suspicious that he was again being ridiculed, and thinking it impossible that this slim, rosy-faced youngster, who was scarcely stouter than Hugh, and who was washing in a tin basin, could be the commander of all these soldierly-looking men, many of whom were old enough to be his father.

“Yes, I ’m the lieutenant-colonel. I ’m in command,” said the gentleman, smiling at him over the towel.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

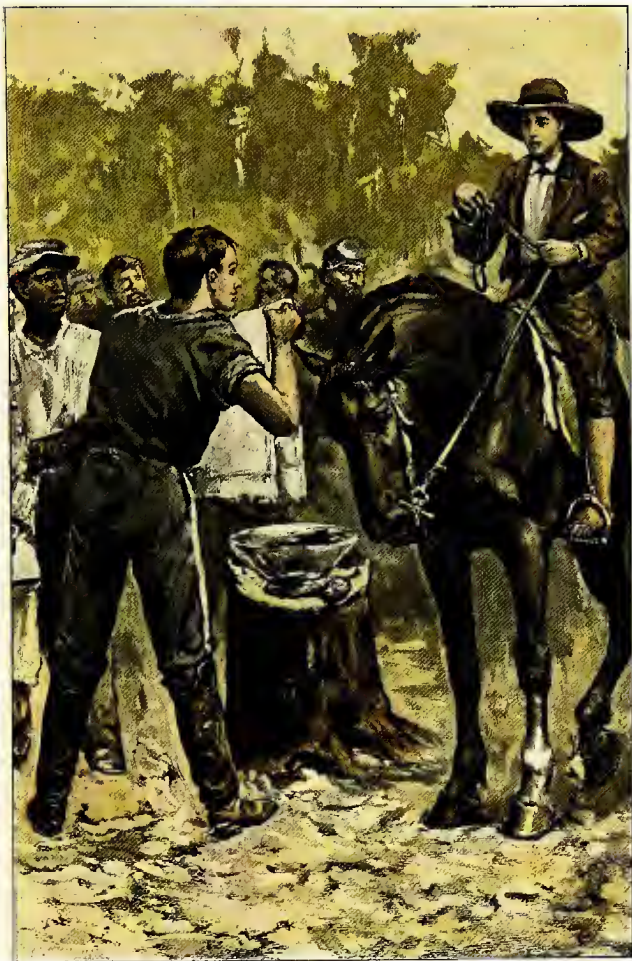
Something made Frank understand that this was really the officer, and he gave his message, which was received with many expressions of thanks.

“Won’t you get down? Here, Campbell, take this horse, will you?” he called to a soldier, as Frank sprang from his horse. The orderly stepped forward and took the bridle.

“Now, come with me,” said the colonel, leading the way. “We must get ready to receive your mother. There are some ladies coming—and breakfast,” he called to a group who were engaged in the same occupation he had just ended, and whom Frank knew by instinct to be officers.

The information seemed to electrify the little knot addressed; for they began to rush around, and in a few moments they all were in their uniforms, and surrounding the colonel, who, having brushed his hair with the aid of a little glass hung on a bush, had hurried into his coat and was buckling on his sword and giving orders in a way which at once satisfied Frank that he was every inch a colonel.

“Now let us go and receive your mother,” said he to the boy. As he strode through the camp with his coat tightly buttoned, his soft hat



“I ’m in command,” said the gentleman, smiling at him over the towel.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

set jauntily on the side of his head, his plumes sweeping over its side, and his sword clattering at his spurred heel, he presented a very different appearance from that which he had made a little before, with his head in a tin basin, and his face covered with lather. In fact, Colonel Marshall was already a noted officer, and before the end of the war he attained still higher rank and reputation.

The colonel met the rest of the party at the bridge, and introduced himself and several officers who soon joined him. The negroes were directed to take the provisions over to the other side of the stream into the camp, and in a little while the whole regiment were enjoying the breakfast. The boys and their mother had at the colonel's request joined his mess, in which was one of their cousins, the brother of their cousin Belle.

The gentlemen could eat scarcely anything, they were so busy attending to the wants of the ladies. The colonel, particularly, waited on their cousin Belle all the time.

As soon as they had finished the colonel left them, and a bugle blew. In a minute all was bustle. Officers were giving orders; horses were saddled and brought out; and, by what seemed

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

magic to the boys, the men, who just before were scattered about among the trees laughing and eating, were standing by their horses all in proper order. The colonel and the officers came and said good-bye.

Again the bugle blew. Every man was in his saddle. A few words by the colonel, followed by other words from the captains, and the column started, turning across the bridge, the feet of the horses thundering on the planks. Then the regiment wound up the hill at a walk, the men singing snatches of a dozen songs, of which "The Bonnie Blue Flag," "Lorena," and "Carry me Back to Old Virginia Shore," were the chief ones.

It seemed to the boys that to be a soldier was the noblest thing on earth; and that this regiment could do anything.

IV

AFTER this it became a common thing for passing regiments to camp near Oakland, and the fire blazed many a night, cooking for the soldiers, till the chickens were crowing in the morning. The negroes all had hen-houses and raised their own chickens, and when a camp was near them they used to drive a thriving trade on their own account, selling eggs and chickens to the privates while the officers were entertained in the "gret house."

It was thought an honor to furnish food to the soldiers. Every soldier was to the boys a hero, and each young officer might rival Ivanhoe or Cœur de Lion.

It was not a great while, however, before they learned that all soldiers were not like their favorite knights. At any rate, thefts were frequent. The absence of men from the plantations, and the constant passing of strangers made stealing easy; hen-roosts were robbed time after time, and even pigs and sheep were taken without any

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

trace of the thieves. The boys' hen-house, however, which was in the yard, had never been troubled. It was about their only possession, and they took great pride in it.

One night the boys were fast asleep in their room in the office, with old Bruno and Nick curled up on their sheepskins on the floor. Hugh was away, so the boys were the only "men" on the place, and felt that they were the protectors of the plantation. The frequent thefts had made every one very suspicious, and the boys had made up their minds to be on the watch, and, if possible, to catch the thief.

The negroes said that the deserters did the stealing.

On the night in question, the boys were sound asleep when old Bruno gave a low growl, and then began walking and sniffing up and down the room. Soon Nick gave a sharp, quick bark.

Frank waked first. He was not startled, for the dogs were in the habit of barking whenever they wished to go out-of-doors. Now, however, they kept it up, and it was in a strain somewhat different from their usual signal.

"What's the matter with you? Go and lie down, Bruno," called Frank. "Hush up, Nick!" But Bruno would not lie down, and Nick would

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

not keep quiet, though at the sound of Frank's voice they felt less responsibility, and contented themselves with a low growling.

After a little while Frank was on the point of dropping off to sleep again, when he heard a sound out in the yard, which at once thoroughly awakened him. He nudged Willy in the side.

"Willy—Willy, wake up; there's some one moving around outdoors."

"Umm-mm," groaned Willy, turning over and settling himself for another nap.

The sound of a chicken chirping out in fright reached Frank's ear.

"Wake up, Willy!" he called, pinching him hard. "There's some one at the hen-house."

Willy was awake in a second. The boys consulted as to what should be done. Willy was sceptical. He thought Frank had been dreaming, or that it was only Uncle Balla, or "some one" moving about the yard. But a second cackle of warning reached them, and in a minute both boys were out of bed pulling on their clothes with trembling impatience.

"Let's go and wake Uncle Balla," proposed Willy, getting himself all tangled in the legs of his trousers.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“No; I ’ll tell you what, let’s catch him ourselves,” suggested Frank.

“All right,” assented Willy. “We ’ll catch him and lock him up; suppose he’s got a pistol? your gun maybe won’t go off; it does n’t always burst the cap.”

“Well, your old musket is loaded, and you can hold him, while I snap the cap at him, and get it ready.”

“All right—I can’t find my jacket—I ’ll hold him.”

“Where in the world is my hat?” whispered Frank. “Never mind, it must be in the house. Let’s go out the back way. We can get out without his hearing us.”

“What shall we do with the dogs? Let ’s shut them up.”

“No, let’s take ’em with us. We can keep them quiet and hold ’em in, and they can track him if he gets away.”

“All right;” and the boys slowly opened the door, and crept stealthily out, Frank clutching his double-barrelled gun, and Willy hugging a heavy musket which he had found and claimed as one of the prizes of war. It was almost pitch-dark.

They decided that one should take one side of

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

the hen-house, and one the other side (in such a way that if they had to shoot, they would almost certainly shoot one another!) but before they had separated both dogs jerked loose from their hands and dashed away in the darkness, barking furiously.

"There he goes round the garden," shouted Willy, as the sound of footsteps like those of a man running with all his might came from the direction which the dogs had taken.

"Come on," and both started; but, after taking a few steps, they stopped to listen so that they might trace the fugitive.

A faint noise behind them arrested their attention, and Frank tiptoed back toward the hen-house. It was too dark to see much, but he heard the hen-house door creak, and was conscious even in the darkness that it was being pushed slowly open.

"Here's one, Willy," he shouted, at the same time putting his gun to his shoulder and pulling the trigger. The hammer fell with a sharp "click" just as the door was snatched to with a bang. The cap had failed to explode, or the chicken-eating days of the individual in the hen-house would have ended then and there.

The boys stood for some moments with their

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

guns pointed at the door of the hen-house expecting the person within to attempt to burst out; but the click of the hammer and their hurried conference without, in which it was promptly agreed to let him have both barrels if he appeared, reconciled him to remaining within.

After some time it was decided to go and wake Uncle Balla, and confer with him as to the proper disposition of their captive. Accordingly, Frank went off to obtain help, while Willy remained to watch the hen-house. As Frank left he called back:

“Willy, you take good aim at him, and if he pokes his head out—let him have it!”

This Willy solemnly promised to do.

Frank was hardly out of hearing before Willy was surprised to hear the prisoner call him by name in the most friendly and familiar manner, although the voice was a strange one.

“Willy, is that you?” called the person inside.

“Yes.”

“Where’s Frank?”

“Gone to get Uncle Balla.”

“Did you see that other fellow?”

“Yes.”

“I wish you ’d shot him. He brought me here

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

and played a joke on me. He told me this was a house I could sleep in, and shut me up in here,—and blest if I don't b'lieve it's nothin' but a hen-house. Let me out here a minute," he continued, after a pause, cajolingly.

"No, I won't," said Willy firmly, getting his gun ready.

There was a pause, and then from the depths of the hen-house issued the most awful groan:

"Umm! Ummm!! Ummmm!!!"

Willy was frightened.

"Umm! Umm!" was repeated.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Willy, feeling sorry in spite of himself.

"Oh! Oh! Oh! I'm so sick," groaned the man in the hen-house.

"How? What's the matter?"

"That man that fooled me in here gave me something to drink, and it's pizened me; oh! oh! oh! I'm dying."

It was a horrible groan.

Willy's heart relented. He moved to the door and was just about to open it to look in when a light flashed across the yard from Uncle Balla's house, and he saw him coming with a flaming light-wood knot in his hand.

V

INSTEAD of opening the door, therefore, Willy called to the old man, who was leisurely crossing the yard:

“Run, Uncle Balla. Quick, run!”

At the call Old Balla and Frank set out as fast as they could.

“What’s the matter? Is he done kill de chickens? Is he done got away?” the old man asked, breathlessly.

“No, he’s dyin’,” shouted Willy.

“Hi! is you shoot him?” asked the old driver.

“No, that other man’s poisoned him. He was the robber and he fooled this one,” explained Willy, opening the door and peeping anxiously in.

“Go ’long, boy,—now, d’ye ever heah de better o’ dat?—dat man’s foolin’ wid you; jes’ tryin’ to git yo’ to let him out.”

“No, he is n’t,” said Willy; “you ought to have heard him.”

But both Balla and Frank were laughing at him, so he felt very shamefaced. He was relieved by hearing another groan.

“Oh, oh, oh! Ah, ah!”

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“You hear that?” he asked, triumphantly.

“I boun’ I ’ll see what’s the matter with him, the roscol! Stan’ right dyah, y’ all, an’ if he try to run shoot him, but mine you don’ hit *me*,” and the old man walked up to the door, and standing on one side flung it open. “What you doin’ in dyah after dese chillern’s chickens?” he called fiercely.

“Hello, old man, ’s ’at you? I ’s mighty sick,” muttered the person within. Old Balla held his torch inside the house, amid a confused cackle and flutter of fowls.

“Well, ef ’t ain’ a white man, and a soldier at dat!” he exclaimed. “What you doin’ heah, robbin’ white folks’ henroos’?” he called, roughly. “Git up off dat groun’; you ain’ sick.”

“Let me get up, Sergeant,—hic—don’t you heah the roll-call?—the tent’s mighty dark; what you fool me in here for?” muttered the man inside.

The boys could see that he was stretched out on the floor, apparently asleep, and that he was a soldier in uniform. Balla stepped inside.

“Is he dead?” asked both boys as Balla caught him by the arms, lifted him, and let him fall again limp on the floor.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Nor, he’s dead-drunk,” said Balla, picking up an empty flask. “Come on out. Let me see what I gwi’ do wid you?” he said, scratching his head.

“I know what I gwi’ do wid you. I gwi’ lock you up right whar you is.”

“Uncle Balla, s’pose he gets well, won’t he get out?”

“Ain’ I gwi’ lock him up? Dat’s good from you, who was jes’ gwi’ let ’im out ef me an’ Frank had n’t come up when we did.”

Willy stepped back abashed. His heart accused him and told him the charge was true. Still he ventured one more question:

“Had n’t you better take the hens out?”

“Nor; ’t ain’ no use to teck nuttin’ out dyah. Ef he comes to, he know we got ’im, an’ he dyahson’ trouble nuttin’.”

And the old man pushed to the door and fastened the iron hasp over the strong staple. Then, as the lock had been broken, he took a large nail from his pocket and fastened it in the staple with a stout string so that it could not be shaken out. All the time he was working he was talking to the boys, or rather to himself, for their benefit.

“Now, you see ef we don’ find him heah in the

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

mornin'! Willy jes' gwi' let you get 'way, but a *man* got you now, wha'ar' been handlin' horses an' know how to hole 'em in the stalls. I boun' he 'll have to butt like a ram to git out dis log hen-house," he said, finally, as he finished tying the last knot in his string, and gave the door a vigorous rattle to test its strength.

Willy had been too much abashed at his mistake to fully appreciate all of the witticisms over the prisoner, but Frank enjoyed them almost as much as Unc' Balla himself.

"Now y' all go 'long to bed, an' I 'll go back an' teck a little nap myself," said he, in parting. "Ef he gits out that hen-house I 'll give you ev'y chicken I got. But he ain' *gwine* git out. A *man's* done fasten him up dyah."

The boys went off to bed, Willy still feeling depressed over his ridiculous mistake. They were soon fast asleep, and if the dogs barked again they did not hear them.

The next thing they knew, Lucy Ann, convulsed with laughter, was telling them a story about Uncle Balla and the man in the hen-house. They jumped up, and pulling on their clothes ran out in the yard, thinking to see the prisoner.

Instead of doing so, they found Uncle Balla

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

standing by the hen-house with a comical look of mystification and chagrin; the roof had been lifted off at one end and not only the prisoner, but every chicken was gone!

The boys were half inclined to cry; Balla's look, however, set them to laughing.

"'Unc' Balla, you got to give me every chicken you got, 'cause you said you would," said Willy.

"Go 'way from heah, boy. Don' pester me when I studyin' to see which way he got out."

"You ain't never had a horse get through the roof before, have you?" said Frank.

"Go 'way from here, I tell you," said the old man, walking around the house, looking at it.

As the boys went back to wash and dress themselves, they heard Balla explaining to Lucy Ann and some of the other servants that "the man them chillern let git away had just come back and tooken out the one he had locked up"; a solution of the mystery he always stoutly insisted upon.

One thing, however, the person's escape effected—it prevented Willy's ever hearing any more of his mistake; but that did not keep him now and then from asking Uncle Balla "if he had fastened his horses well."

VI

THESE hens were not the last things stolen from Oakland. Nearly all the men in the country had gone with the army. Indeed, with the exception of a few overseers who remained to work the farms, every man in the neighborhood, between the ages of seventeen and fifty, was in the army. The country was thus left almost wholly unprotected, and it would have been entirely so but for the "Home Guard," as it was called, which was a company composed of young boys and the few old men who remained at home, and who had volunteered for service as a local guard, or police body, for the neighborhood of their homes.

Occasionally, too, later on, a small detachment of men, under a leader known as a "conscript-officer," would come through the country hunting for any men who were subject to the conscript law but who had evaded it, and for deserters who had run away from the army and refused to return.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

These two classes of troops, however, stood on a very different footing. The Home Guard was regarded with much respect, for it was composed of those whose extreme age or youth alone withheld them from active service; and every youngster in its ranks looked upon it as a training school, and was ready to die in defence of his home if need were, and, besides, expected to obtain permission to go into the army "next year."

The conscript-guard, on the other hand, were grown men, and were thought to be shirking the very dangers and hardships into which they were trying to force others.

A few miles from Oakland, on the side toward the mountain road and beyond the big woods, lay a district of virgin forest and old-field pines which, even before the war, had acquired a reputation of an unsavory nature, though its inhabitants were a harmless people. No highways ran through this region, and the only roads which entered it were mere wood-ways, filled with bushes and carpeted with pine-tags; and, being travelled only by the inhabitants, appeared to outsiders "to jes' peter out," as the phrase went. This territory was known by the unpromising name of Holetown.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

Its denizens were a peculiar but kindly race known to the boys as "poor white folks," and called by the negroes, with great contempt, "po' white trash." Some of them owned small places in the pines; but the majority were simply tenants. They were an inoffensive people, and their worst vices were intemperance and evasion of the tax-laws.

They made their living—or rather, they existed—by fishing and hunting; and, to eke it out, attempted the cultivation of little patches of corn and tobacco near their cabins, or in the bottoms where small branches ran into the stream already mentioned.

In appearance they were usually so thin and sallow that one had to look at them twice to see them clearly. At best, they looked vague and illusive.

They were brave enough. At the outbreak of the war nearly all of the men in this community enlisted, thinking, as many others did, that war was more like play than work, and consisted more of resting than of laboring. Although most of them, when in battle, showed the greatest fearlessness, yet the duties of camp soon became irksome to them, and they grew sick of the restraint and drilling of camp-life; so some of

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

them, when refused a furlough, took it, and came home. Others stayed at home after leave had ended, feeling secure in their stretches of pine and swamp, not only from the feeble efforts of the conscript-guard, but from any parties who might be sent in search of them.

In this way it happened, as time went by, that Holetown became known to harbor a number of deserters.

According to the negroes, it was full of them; and many stories were told about glimpses of men dodging behind trees in the big woods, or rushing away through the underbrush like wild cattle. And, though the grown people doubted whether the negroes had not been startled by some of the hogs, which were quite wild, feeding in the woods, the boys were satisfied that the negroes really had seen deserters.

This became a certainty when there came report after report of these wood-skulkers, and when the conscript-guard, with the brightest of uniforms, rode by with as much show and noise as if on a fox-hunt. Then it became known that deserters were, indeed, infesting the piny district of Holetown, and in considerable numbers.

Some of them, it was said, were pursuing agriculture and all their ordinary vocations as

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

openly as in time of peace, and more industriously. They had a regular code of signals, and nearly every person in the Holetown settlement was in league with them.

When the conscript-guard came along, there would be a rush of tow-headed children through the woods, or some of the women about the cabins would blow a horn lustily; after which not a man could be found in all the district. The horn told just how many men were in the guard, and which path they were following; every member of the troop being honored with a short, quick "toot."

"What are you blowing that horn for?" sternly asked the guard one morning of an old woman,—old Mrs. Hall, who stood out in front of her little house blowing like Boreas in the pictures.

"Jes' blowin' fur Millindy to come to dinner," she said, sullenly. "Can't y' all let a po' 'ooman call her gals to git some 'n' to eat? You got all her boys in d'army, killin' 'em; why n't yo' go and git kilt some yo'self, 'stidder ridin' 'bout heah tromplin' all over po' folk's chickens?"

When the troop returned in the evening, she was still blowing; "blowin' fur Millindy to come

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

home," she said, with more sharpness than before. But there must have been many Millindys, for horns were sounding all through the settlement.

The deserters, at such times, were said to take to the swamps, and marvellous rumors were abroad of one or more caves, all fitted up, wherein they concealed themselves, like the robbers in the stories the boys were so fond of reading.

After a while thefts of pigs and sheep became so common that they were charged to the deserters.

Finally it grew to be such a pest that the ladies in the neighborhood asked the Home Guard to take action in the matter, and after some delay it became known that this valorous body was going to invade Holetown and capture the deserters or drive them away. Hugh was to accompany them, of course; and he looked very handsome, as well as very important, when he started out on horseback to join the troop. It was his first active service; and with his trousers in his boots and his pistol in his belt he looked as brave as Julius Cæsar, and quite laughed at his mother's fears for him, as she kissed him

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

good-bye and walked out with him to his horse, which Balla held at the gate.

The boys asked leave to go with him; but Hugh was so scornful over their request, and looked so soldierly as he galloped away with the other men that the boys felt as cheap as possible.

VII

WHEN the boys went into the house they found that their Aunt Mary had a headache that morning, and, even with the best intentions of doing her duty in teaching them, had been forced to go to bed. Their mother was too much occupied with her charge of providing for a family of over a dozen white persons, and five times as many colored dependents, to give any time to acting as substitute in the school-room, so the boys found themselves with a holiday before them. It seemed vain to try to shoot duck on the creek, and the perch were averse to biting. The boys accordingly determined to take both guns and to set out for a real hunt in the big woods.

They received their mother's permission, and after a lunch was prepared they started in high glee, talking about the squirrels and birds they expected to kill.

Frank had his gun, and Willy had the musket;

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

and both carried a plentiful supply of powder and some tolerably round slugs made from cartridges.

They usually hunted in the part of the woods nearest the house, and they knew that game was not very abundant there; so, as a good long day was before them, they determined to go over to the other side of the woods.

They accordingly pushed on, taking a path which led through the forest. They went entirely through the big woods without seeing anything but one squirrel, and presently found themselves at the extreme edge of Holetown. They were just grumbling at the lack of game when they heard a distant horn. The sound came from perhaps a mile or more away, but was quite distinct.

“What’s that? Somebody fox-hunting?—or is it a dinner-horn?” asked Willy, listening intently.

“It’s a horn to warn deserters, that’s what ’t is,” said Frank, pleased to show his superior knowledge.

“I tell you what to do:—let’s go and hunt deserters,” said Willy, eagerly.

“All right. Won’t that be fun!” and both boys set out down the road toward a point where they knew one of the paths ran into the pine-

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

district, talking of the numbers of prisoners they expected to take.

In an instant they were as alert and eager as young hounds on a trail. They had mapped out a plan before, and they knew exactly what they had to do. Frank was the captain, by right of his being older; and Willy was lieutenant, and was to obey orders. The chief thing that troubled them was that they did not wish to be seen by any of the women or children about the cabins, for they all knew the boys, because they were accustomed to come to Oakland for supplies; then, too, the boys wished to remain on friendly terms with their neighbors. Another thing worried them. They did not know what to do with their prisoners after they should have captured them. However, they pushed on and soon came to a dim cart-way, which ran at right-angles to the main road and which went into the very heart of Holetown. Here they halted to reconnoitre and to inspect their weapons.

Even from the main road, the track, as it led off through the overhanging woods with thick underbrush of chinquapin bushes, appeared to the boys to have something strange about it, though they had at other times walked it from end to end. Still, they entered boldly, clutching

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

their guns. Willy suggested that they should go in Indian file and that the rear one should step in the other's footprints as the Indians do; but Frank thought it was best to walk abreast, as the Indians walked in their peculiar way only to prevent an enemy who crossed their trail from knowing how many they were; and, so far from it being any disadvantage for the deserters to know *their* number, it was even better that they should know there were two, so that they would not attack from the rear. Accordingly, keeping abreast, they struck in; each taking the woods on one side of the road, which he was to watch and for which he was to be responsible.

The farther they went the more indistinct the track became, and the wilder became the surrounding woods. They proceeded with great caution, examining every particularly thick clump of bushes; peeping behind each very large tree; and occasionally even taking a glance up among its boughs; for they had themselves so often planned how, if pursued, they would climb trees and conceal themselves, that they would not have been at all surprised to find a fierce deserter, armed to the teeth, crouching among the branches.

Though they searched carefully every spot

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

where a deserter could possibly lurk, they passed through the oak woods and were deep in the pines without having seen any foe or heard a noise which could possibly proceed from one. A squirrel had daringly leaped from the trunk of a hickory-tree and run into the woods, right before them, stopping impudently to take a good look at them; but they were hunting larger game than squirrels, and they resisted the temptation to take a shot at him,—an exercise of virtue which brought them a distinct feeling of pleasure. They were, however, beginning to be embarrassed as to their next course. They could hear the dogs barking, farther on in the pines, and knew they were approaching the vicinity of the settlement; for they had crossed the little creek which ran through a thicket of elder bushes and “gums,” and which marked the boundary of Holetown. Little paths, too, every now and then turned off from the main track and went into the pines, each leading to a cabin or bit of creek-bottom deeper in. They therefore were in a real dilemma concerning what to do; and Willy’s suggestion, to eat lunch, was a welcome one. They determined to go a little way into the woods, where they could not be seen, and had just taken the lunch out of the game-

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

bag and were turning into a by-path, when they met a man who was coming along at a slow, lounging walk, and carrying a long single-barrelled shot-gun across his arm.

When first they heard him, they thought he might be a deserter; but when he came nearer they saw that he was simply a countryman out hunting; for his old game-bag (from which peeped a squirrel's tail) was over his shoulder, and he had no weapon at all, excepting that old squirrel-gun.

"Good morning, sir," said both boys, politely.

"Mornin'! What luck y' all had?" he asked good-naturedly, stopping and putting the butt of his gun on the ground, and resting lazily on it, preparatory to a chat.

"We're not hunting; we're hunting deserters."

"Huntin' deserters!" echoed the man with a smile which broke into a chuckle of amusement as the thought worked its way into his brain. "Ain't you see' none?"

"No," said both boys in a breath, greatly pleased at his friendliness. "Do you know where any are?"

The man scratched his head, seeming to reflect.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Well, ’pears to me I hearn tell o’ some, ’roun’ to ’des that-a-ways,” making a comprehensive sweep of his arm in the direction just opposite to that which the boys were taking. “I seen the conscrip’-guard a little while ago pokin’ ’roun’ this-a-way; but Lor’, that ain’ the way to ketch deserters. I knows every foot o’ groun’ this-a-way, an’ ef they was any deserters roun’ here I’d be mighty apt to know it.”

This announcement was an extinguisher to the boys’ hopes. Clearly, they were going in the wrong direction.

“We are just going to eat our lunch,” said Frank; “won’t you join us?”

Willy added his invitation to his brother’s, and their friend politely accepted, suggesting that they should walk back a little way and find a log. This all three did; and in a few minutes they were enjoying the lunch which the boys’ mother had provided, while the stranger was telling the boys his views about deserters, which, to say the least, were very original.

“I seen the conscrip’-guard jes’ this mornin’, ridin’ ’round whar they knowd they war n’ no deserters, but ole womens and children,” he said with his mouth full. “Why n’t they go whar they knows deserters *is?*” he asked.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Where are they? We heard they had a cave down on the river, and we were going there,” declared the boys.

“Down on the river?—a cave? Ain’ no cave down thar, without it’s below Rockett’s mill; fur I ’ve hunted and fished ev’y foot o’ that river up an’ down both sides, an’ t’ ain’ a hole thar, big enough to hide a’ ole hyah, I ain’ know.”

This proof was too conclusive to admit of further argument.

“Why don’t *you* go in the army?” asked Willy, after a brief reflection.

“What? Why don’t *I* go in the army?” repeated the hunter. “Why, I ’s *in* the army! You didn’t think I war n’t in the army, did you?”

The hunter’s tone and the expression of his face were so full of surprise that Willy felt deeply mortified at his rudeness, and began at once to stammer something to explain himself.

“I b’longs to Colonel Marshall’s regiment,” continued the man, “an’ I ’s been home sick on leave o’ absence. Got wounded in the leg, an’ I ’s jes’ gettin’ well. I ain’ rightly well enough to go back now, but I ’s anxious to git back; I ’m gwine to-morrow mornin’ ef I don’ go this evenin’. You see I kin hardly walk now!” and

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

to demonstrate his lameness, he got up and limped a few yards. "I ain' well yit," he pursued, returning and dropping into his seat on the log, with his face drawn up by the pain the exertion had brought on.

"Let me see your wound. Is it sore now?" asked Willy, moving nearer to the man with a look expressive of mingled curiosity and sympathy.

"You can't see it; it's up heah," said the soldier, touching the upper part of his hip; "an' I got another one heah," he added, placing his hand very gently to his side. "This one's whar a Yankee run me through with his sword. Now, that one was where a piece of shell hit me,—I don't keer nothin' 'bout that," and he opened his shirt and showed a triangular purple scar on his shoulder.

"You certainly must be a brave soldier," exclaimed both boys, impressed at sight of the scar, their voices softened by fervent admiration.

"Yes, I kep' up with the bes' of 'em," he said, with a pleased smile.

Suddenly a horn began to blow, "toot—toot—toot," as if all the "Millindys" in the world were being summoned. It was so near the boys that it quite startled them.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“That’s for the deserters, now,” they both exclaimed.

Their friend looked calmly up and down the road, both ways.

“Them rascally conscrip’-guard been tellin’ you all that, to gi’ ’em some excuse for keepin’ out o’ th’ army theyselves—that ’s all. Th’ ain’ gwine ketch no deserters any whar in all these parts, an’ you kin tell ’em so. I ’m gwine down thar an’ see what that horn ’s a-blown’ fur; hit ’s somebody’s dinner horn, or somp’n’,” he added, rising and taking up his game-bag.

“Can’t we go with you?” asked the boys.

“Well, nor, I reckon you better not,” he drawled; “thar ’s some right bad dogs down thar in the pines,—mons’us bad; an’ I ’s gwine cut through the woods an’ see ef I can’t pick up a squ’rr’l, gwine ’long, for the ole ’ooman’s supper, as I got to go ’way to-night or to-morrow; she ’s mighty poorly.”

“Is she poorly much?” asked Willy, greatly concerned. “We’ll get mamma to come and see her to-morrow, and bring her some bread.”

“Nor, she ain’ so sick; that is to say, she jis’ poorly and ’sturbed in her mind. She gittin’ sort o’ old. Here, y’ all take these squ’rr’ls,” he said, taking the squirrels from his old game-bag and tossing them at Willy’s feet. Both boys

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

protested, but he insisted. "Oh, yes; I kin get some mo' fur her."

"Y' all better go home. Well, good-by, much obliged to you," and he strolled off with his gun in the bend of his arm, leaving the boys to admire and talk over his courage.

They turned back, and had gone about a quarter of a mile, when they heard a great trampling of horses behind them. They stopped to listen, and in a little while a squadron of cavalry came in sight. The boys stepped to one side of the road to wait for them, eager to tell the important information they had received from their friend, that there were no deserters in that section. In a hurried consultation they agreed not to tell that they had been hunting deserters themselves, as they knew the soldiers would only have a laugh at their expense.

"Hello, boys, what luck?" called the officer in the lead, in a friendly manner.

They told him they had not shot anything; that the squirrels had been given to them; and then both boys inquired:

"You all hunting for deserters?"

"You seen any?" asked the leader, carelessly, while one or two men pressed their horses forward eagerly.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

"No, th' ain't any deserters in this direction at all," said the boys, with conviction in their manner.

"How do you know?" asked the officer.

" 'Cause a gentleman told us so."

"Who? When? What gentleman?"

"A gentleman who met us a little while ago."

"How long ago? Who was he?"

"Don't know who he was," said Frank.

"When we were eating our snack," put in Willy, not to be left out.

"How was he dressed? Where was it? What sort of man was he?" eagerly inquired the leading trooper.

The boys proceeded to describe their friend, impressed by the intense interest accorded them by the listeners.

"He was a sort of a man with red hair, and wore a pair of gray breeches and an old pair of shoes, and was in his shirt-sleeves." Frank was the spokesman.

"And he had a gun—a long squirrel-gun," added Willy, "and he said he belonged to Colonel Marshall's regiment."

"Why, that's Tim Mills. He's a deserter himself," exclaimed the captain.

"No, he ain't—he ain't any deserter," pro-

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

tested both at once. "He is a mighty brave soldier, and he 's been home on a furlough to get well of a wound on his leg where he was shot."

"Yes, and it ain't well yet, but he 's going back to his command to-night or to-morrow morning; and he's got another wound in his side where a Yankee ran him through with his sword. We know *he* ain't any deserter."

"How do you know all this?" asked the officer.

"He told us so himself, just now—a little while ago, that is," said the boys.

The man laughed.

"Why, he 's fooled you to death. That 's Tim himself, that 's been doing all the devilment about here. He is the worst deserter in the whole gang."

"We saw the wound on his shoulder," declared the boys, still doubting.

"I know it; he 's got one there,—that 's what I know him by. Which way did he go,—and how long has it been?"

"He went that way, down in the woods; and it 's been some time. He 's got away now."

The lads by this time were almost convinced of their mistake; but they could not prevent their sympathy from being on the side of their late agreeable companion.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“We ’ll catch the rascal,” declared the leader, very fiercely. “Come on, men,—he can’t have gone far;” and he wheeled his horse about and dashed back up the road at a great pace, followed by his men. The boys were half inclined to follow and aid in the capture; but Frank, after a moment’s thought, said solemnly:

“No, Willy; an Arab never betrays a man who has eaten his salt. This man has broken bread with us; we cannot give him up. I don’t think we ought to have told about him as much as we did.”

This was an argument not to be despised.

A little later, as the boys trudged home, they heard the horns blowing again a regular “toot-toot” for “Millindy.” It struck them that supper followed dinner very quickly in Holetown.

When the troop passed by in the evening the men were in very bad humor. They had had a fruitless addition to their ride, and some of them were inclined to say that the boys had never seen any man at all, which the boys thought was pretty silly, as the man had eaten at least two-thirds of their lunch.

Somehow the story got out, and Hugh was very scornful because the boys had given their lunch to a deserter.

VIII

AS time went by the condition of things at Oakland changed—as it did everywhere else. The boys' mother, like all the other ladies of the country, was so devoted to the cause that she gave to the soldiers until there was nothing left. After that there was a failure of the crops, and the immediate necessities of the family and the hands on the place were great.

There was no sugar nor coffee nor tea. These luxuries had been given up long before. An attempt was made to manufacture sugar out of the sorghum, or sugar-cane, which was now being cultivated as an experiment; but it proved unsuccessful, and molasses made from the cane was the only sweetening. The boys, however, never liked anything sweetened with molasses, so they gave up everything that had molasses in it. Sassafras tea was tried as a substitute for tea, and a drink made out of parched corn and wheat, of burnt sweet potato and other things, in the place of coffee; but none of them were fit

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

to drink—at least so the boys thought. The wheat crop proved a failure; but the corn turned out very fine, and the boys learned to live on corn bread, as there was no wheat bread.

The soldiers still came by, and the house was often full of young officers who came to see the boys' cousins. The boys used to ride the horses to and from the stables, and, being perfectly fearless, became very fine riders.

Several times, among the visitors, came the young colonel who had commanded the regiment that had camped at the bridge the first year of the war. It did not seem to the boys that Cousin Belle liked him, for she took much longer to dress when he came; and if there were other officers present she would take very little notice of the colonel.

Both boys were in love with her, and after considerable hesitation had written her a joint letter to tell her so, at which she laughed heartily and kissed them both and called them her sweet-hearts. But, though they were jealous of several young officers who came from time to time, they felt sorry for the colonel,—their cousin was so mean to him. They were on the best terms with him and had announced their intention of going into his regiment if only the war should last long

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

enough. When he came there was always a scramble to get his horse; though of all who came to Oakland he rode the wildest horses, as both boys knew by practical experience.

At length the soldiers moved off too far to permit them to come on visits, and things were very dull. So it was for a long while.

But one evening in May, about sunset, as the boys were playing in the yard, a man came riding through the place on the way to Richmond. His horse showed that he had been riding hard. He asked the nearest way to "Ground-Squirrel Bridge." The Yankees, he said, were coming. It was a raid. He had ridden ahead of them, and had left them about Greenbay depot, which they had set on fire. He was in too great a hurry to stop and get something to eat, and he rode off, leaving much excitement behind him; for Greenbay was only eight miles away, and Oakland lay right between two roads to Richmond, down one or the other of which the party of raiders must certainly pass.

It was the first time the boys ever saw their mother exhibit so much emotion as she then did. She came to the door and called:

"Balla, come here." Her voice sounded to the boys a little strained and troubled, and they

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

ran up the steps and stood by her. Balla came to the portico, and looked up with an air of inquiry. He, too, showed excitement.

“Balla, I want you to know that if you wish to go, you can do so.”

“Hi, Mistis—” began Balla, with an air of reproach; but she cut him short and kept on.

“I want you all to know it.” She was speaking now so as to be heard by the cook and the maids who were standing about the yard listening to her. “I want you all to know it—every one on the place! You can go if you wish; but, if you go, you can never come back!”

“Hi, Mistis,” broke in Uncle Balla, “whar is I got to go? I wuz born on dis place an’ I ’spec’ to die here, an’ be buried right *yonder*”; and he turned and pointed up to the dark clumps of trees that marked the graveyard on the hill, a half mile away, where the colored people were buried. “Dat I does,” he affirmed positively. “Y’ all sticks by us, and we ’ll stick by you.”

“I know I ain’ gwine nowhar wid no Yankees or nothin’,” said Lucy Ann, in an undertone.

“Dee tell me dee got hoofs and horns,” laughed one of the women in the yard.

The boys’ mother started to say something further to Balla, but though she opened her lips,

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

she did not speak; she turned suddenly and walked into the house and into her chamber, where she shut the door behind her. The boys thought she was angry, but when they softly followed her a few minutes afterward, she got up hastily from where she had been kneeling beside the bed, and they saw that she had been crying. A murmur under the window called them back to the portico. It had begun to grow dark; but a bright spot was glowing on the horizon, and on this every one's gaze was fixed.

"Where is it, Balla? What is it?" asked the boys' mother, her voice no longer strained and harsh, but even softer than usual.

"It 's the depot, madam. They 's burnin' it. That man told me they was burnin' ev'ywhar they went."

"Will they be here to-night?" asked his mistress.

"No, marm; I don' hardly think they will. That man said they could n't travel more than thirty miles a day; but they 'ell be plenty of 'em here to-morrow—to breakfast." He gave a nervous sort of laugh.

"Here,—you all come here," said their mistress to the servants. She went to the smoke-house and unlocked it. "Go in there and get

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

down the bacon—take a piece, each of you.” A great deal was still left. “Balla, step here.” She called him aside and spoke earnestly in an undertone.

“Yes ’m, that ’s so; that ’s jes’ what I wuz gwine do,” the boys heard him say.

Their mother sent the boys out. She went and locked herself in her room, but they heard her footsteps as she turned about within, and now and then they heard her opening and shutting drawers and moving chairs.

In a little while she came out.

“Frank, you and Willy go and tell Balla to come to the chamber door. He may be out in the stable.”

They dashed out, proud to bear so important a message. They could not find him, but an hour later they heard him coming from the stable. He at once went into the house. They rushed into the chamber, where they found the door of the closet open.

“Balla, come in here,” called their mother from within. “Have you got them safe?” she asked.

“Yes ’m; jes’ as safe as they kin be. I want to be ’bout here when they come, or I ’d go down an’ stay whar they is.”

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“What is it?” asked the boys.

“Where is the best place to put that?” she said, pointing to a large, strong box in which, they knew, the finest silver was kept; indeed, all excepting what was used every day on the table.

“Well, I declar’, Mistis, that ’s hard to tell,” said the old driver, “without it ’s in the stable.”

“They may burn that down.”

“That ’s so; you might bury it under the floor of the smoke-house?”

“I have heard that they always look for silver there,” said the boys’ mother. “How would it do to bury it in the garden?”

“That ’s the very place I was gwine name,” said Balla, with flattering approval. “They can’t burn *that* down, and if they gwine dig for it then they ’ll have to dig a long time before they git over that big garden.” He stooped and lifted up one end of the box to test its weight.

“I thought of the other end of the flower-bed, between the big rose-bush and the lilac.”

“That ’s the very place I had in my mind,” declared the old man. “They won’ never fine it dyah!”

“We know a good place,” said the boys both together; “it ’s a heap better than that. It ’s

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

where we bury our treasures when we play 'Black-beard the Pirate.' "

"Very well," said their mother; "I don't care to know where it is until after to-morrow, anyhow. I know I can trust you," she added, addressing Balla.

"Yes'm, you know dat," said he, simply. "I 'll jes' go an' git my hoe."

"The garden has n't got a roof to it, has it, Unc' Balla?" asked Willy, quietly.

"Go 'way from here, boy," said the old man, making a sweep at him with his hand. "That boy ain' never done talkin' 'bout that thing yit," he added, with a pleased laugh, to his mistress.

"And you ain't ever given me all those chickens either," responded Willy, forgetting his grammar.

"Oh, well, I 'm *gwi*' do it; ain't you hear me say I 'm *gwine* do it?" he laughed as he went out.

The boys were too excited to get sleepy before the silver was hidden. Their mother told them they might go down into the garden and help Balla, on condition that they would not talk.

"That 's the way we always do when we bury the treasure. Ain't it, Willy?" asked Frank.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“If a man speaks, it ’s death!” declared Willy, slapping his hand on his side as if to draw a sword, striking a theatrical attitude and speaking in a deep voice.

“Give the ‘galleon’ to us,” said Frank.

“No; be off with you,” said their mother.

“That ain’t the way,” said Frank. “A pirate never digs the hole until he has his treasure at hand. To do so would prove him but a novice; would n’t it, Willy?”

“Well, I leave it all to you, my little Buccaneers,” said their mother, laughing. “I ’ll take care of the spoons and forks we use every day. I ’ll just hide them away in a hole somewhere.”

The boys started off after Balla with a shout, but remembered their errand and suddenly hushed down to a little squeal of delight at being actually engaged in burying treasure—real silver. It seemed too good to be true, and withal there was a real excitement about it, for how could they know but that some one might watch them from some hiding-place, or might even fire into them as they worked?

They met the old fellow as he was coming from the carriage-house with a hoe and a spade in his hand. He was on his way to the garden

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

in a very straightforward manner, but the boys made him understand that to bury treasure it was necessary to be particularly secret, and after some little grumbling, Balla humored them.

The difficulty of getting the box of silver out of the house secretly, whilst all the family were up, and the servants were moving about, was so great that this part of the affair had to be carried on in a manner different from the usual programme of pirates of the first water. Even the boys had to admit this; and they yielded to old Balla's advice on this point, but made up for it by additional formality, ceremony, and secrecy in pointing out the spot where the box was to be hid.

Old Balla was quite accustomed to their games and fun—their “pranks,” as he called them. He accordingly yielded willingly when they marched him to a point at the lower end of the yard, on the opposite side from the garden, and left him. But he was inclined to give trouble when they both reappeared with a gun, and in a whisper announced that they must march first up the ditch which ran by the spring around the foot of the garden.

“Look here, boys; I ain’ got time to fool with

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

you chillern," said the old man. Ain't you hear your ma tell me she 'pend on me to bury that silver what yo' gran'ma and gran'pa used to eat off o'—an' don' wan' nobody to know nothin' 'bout it? An' y' all comin' here with guns, like you huntin' squ'rr'ls, an' now talkin' 'bout wadin' in the ditch!"

"But, Unc' Balla, that's the way all buccaneers do," protested Frank.

"Yes, buccaneers always go by water," said Willy.

"And we can stoop in the ditch and come in at the far end of the garden, so nobody can see us," added Frank.

"Bookanear or bookafar,—I 'se gwine in dat garden and dig a hole wid my hoe, an' I is too ole to be wadin' in a ditch like chillern. I got the misery in my knee now, so bad I 'se sca'cely able to stand. I don't know huccome y' all ain't satisfied with the place you' ma an' I done pick, anyways."

This was too serious a mutiny for the boys. So it was finally agreed that one gun should be returned to the office, and that they should enter by the gate, after which Balla was to go with the boys by the way they should show him, and see the spot they thought of.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

They took him down through the weeds around the garden, crouching under the rose-bushes, and at last stopped at a spot under the slope, completely surrounded by shrubbery.

“Here is the spot,” said Frank in a whisper, pointing under one of the bushes.

“It ’s in a line with the longest limb of the big oak-tree by the gate,” added Willy, “and when this locust bush and that cedar grow to be big trees, it will be just half-way between them.”

As this seemed to Balla a very good place, he set to work at once to dig, the two boys helping him as well as they could. It took a great deal longer to dig the hole in the dark than they had expected, and when they got back to the house everything was quiet.

The boys had their hats pulled over their eyes, and had turned their jackets inside out to disguise themselves.

“It ’s a first-rate place! Ain’t it, Unc’ Balla?” they said, as they entered the chamber where their mother and aunt were waiting for them.

“Do you think it will do, Balla?” their mother asked.

“Oh, yes, madam; it ’s far enough, an’ they got mighty comical ways to get dyah, wadin’ in ditch an’ things—it will do. I ain’ sho’ I kin fin’

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

it ag'in myself." He was not particularly enthusiastic. Now, however, he shouldered the box, with a grunt at its weight, and the party went slowly out through the back door into the dark. The glow of the burning depot was still visible in the west.

Then it was decided that Willy should go before—he said to "reconnoitre," Balla said "to open the gate and lead the way,"—and that Frank should bring up the rear.

They trudged slowly on through the darkness, Frank and Willy watching on every side, old Balla stooping under the weight of the big box.

After they were some distance in the garden they heard, or thought they heard, a sound back at the gate, but decided that it was nothing but the latch clicking; and they went on down to their hiding place.

In a little while the black box was well settled in the hole, and the dirt was thrown upon it. The replaced earth made something of a mound, which was unfortunate. They had not thought of this; but they covered it with leaves, and agreed that it was so well hidden, the Yankees would never dream of looking there.

"Unc' Balla, where are your horses?" asked one of the boys.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“That ’s for me to know, an’ them to find out what kin,” replied the old fellow with a chuckle of satisfaction.

The whole party crept back out of the garden, and the boys were soon dreaming of buccaneers and pirates.

IX

THE boys were not sure that they had even fallen asleep when they heard Lucy Ann call outside. They turned over to take another nap. She was coming up to the door. No, for it was a man's step, it must be Uncle Balla's; they heard horses trampling and people talking. In a second the door was flung open, and a man strode into the room followed by one, two, a half-dozen others, all white and all in uniform. They were Yankees. The boys were too frightened to speak. They thought they were arrested for hiding the silver.

“Get up, you lazy little rebels,” cried one of the intruders, not unpleasantly. As the boys were not very quick in obeying, being really too frightened to do more than sit up in bed, the man caught the mattress by the end, and lifting it with a jerk emptied them and all the bedclothes out into the middle of the floor in a heap. At this all the other men laughed. A minute more and he had drawn his sword. The boys expected no

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

less than to be immediately killed. They were almost paralyzed. But instead of plunging his sword into them, the man began to stick it into the mattresses and to rip them up; while others pulled open the drawers of the bureau and pitched the things on the floor.

The boys felt themselves to be in a very exposed and defenceless condition; and Willy, who had become tangled in the bedclothes, and had been a little hurt in falling, now that the strain was somewhat over, began to cry.

In a minute a shadow darkened the doorway and their mother stood in the room.

“Leave the room instantly!” she cried.
“Are n’t you ashamed to frighten children!”

“We have n’t hurt the brats,” said the man with the sword, good-naturedly.

“Well, you terrify them to death. It ’s just as bad. Give me those clothes!” and she sprang forward and snatched the boys’ clothes from the hands of a man who had taken them up. She flung the suits to the boys, who lost no time in slipping into them.

They had at once recovered their courage in the presence of their mother. She seemed to them, as she braved the intruders, the grandest person they had ever seen. Her face was white,

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

but her eyes were like coals of fire. They were very glad she had never looked or talked so to them.

When they got outdoors the yard was full of soldiers. They were upon the porches, in the entry, and in the house. The smoke-house was open and so were the doors of all the other out-houses, and now and then a man passed, carrying some article which the boys recognized.

In a little while the soldiers had taken everything they could carry conveniently, and even things which must have caused them some inconvenience. They had secured all the bacon that had been left in the smoke-house, as well as all other eatables they could find. It was a queer sight, to see the fellows sitting on their horses with a ham or a pair of fowls tied to one side of the saddle and an engraving, or a package of books, or some ornament, to the other.

A new party of men had by this time come up from the direction of the stables.

“Old man, come here!” called some of them to Balla, who was standing near expostulating with the men who were about the fire.

“Who?—me?” asked Balla.

“B’ain’t you the carriage driver?”

“Ain’t I the keridge driver?”

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Yes, *you*; we know you are, so you need not be lying about it.”

“Hi! yes; I the keridge driver. Who say I ain’t?”

“Well, where have you hid those horses? Come, we want to know, quick,” said the fellow roughly, taking out his pistol in a threatening way.

The old man’s eyes grew wide. “Hi! befo’ de Lord! Marster, how I know anything of the horses ef they ain’t in the stable,—there ’s where we keep horses!”

“Here, you come with us. We won’t have no foolin’ ’bout this,” said his questioner, seizing him by the shoulder and jerking him angrily around. “If you don’t show us pretty quick where those horses are, we’ll put a bullet or two into you. March off there!”

He was backed by a half-a-dozen more, but the pistol, which was at old Balla’s head, was his most efficient ally.

“Hi! Marster, don’t p’int dat thing at me that way. I ain’t ready to die yit—an’ I ain’ like dem things, noways,” protested Balla.

There is no telling how much further his courage could have withstood their threats, for the boys’ mother made her appearance. She was

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

about to bid Balla show where the horses were, when a party rode into the yard leading them.

"Hi! there are Bill and John, now," exclaimed the boys, recognizing the black carriage-horses which were being led along.

"Well, ef dee ain't got 'em, sho' 'nough!" exclaimed the old driver, forgetting his fear of the cocked pistols.

"Gentlemen, marsters, don't teck my horses, ef you *please*," he pleaded, pushing through the group that surrounded him, and approaching the man who led the horses.

They only laughed at him.

Both the boys ran to their mother, and, flinging their arms about her, burst out crying.

In a few minutes the men started off, riding across the fields; and in a little while not a soldier was in sight.

"I wish Marse William could see you ridin' 'cross them fields," said Balla, looking after the retiring troop in futile indignation.

Investigation revealed the fact that every horse and mule on the plantation had been carried off, except only two or three old mules, which were evidently considered not worth taking.

X

AFTER this, times were very hard on the plantation. But the boys' mother struggled to provide as best she could for the family and hands. She used to ride all over the county to secure the supplies which were necessary for their support; one of the boys usually being her escort and riding behind her on one of the old mules that the raiders had left. In this way the boys became acquainted with the roads of the county and even with all the bridle-paths in the neighborhood of their home. Many of these were dim enough too, running through stretches of pine forest, across old fields which were little better than jungle, along gullies, up ditches, and through woods mile after mile. They were generally useful only to a race, such as the negroes, which had an instinct for direction like that shown by some animals; but the boys learned to follow them unerringly, and soon became as skilful in "keepin' de parf" as any night-walker on the plantation.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

As the year passed the times grew harder and harder, and the expeditions made by the boys' mother became longer and longer, and more and more frequent.

The meat gave out, and, worst of all, they had no hogs left for next year. The plantation usually subsisted on bacon; but now there was not a pig left on the place—unless the old wild sow in the big woods (who had refused to be “driven up” the fall before) still survived, which was doubtful; for the most diligent search was made for her without success, and it was conceded that even she had fallen prey to the deserters. Nothing was heard of her for months.

One day, in the autumn, the boys were out hunting in the big woods, in the most distant and wildest part, where they sloped down toward a little marshy branch that ran into the river a mile or two away.

It was a very dry spell and squirrels were hard to find, owing, the boys agreed, to the noise made in tramping through the dry leaves. Finally, they decided to station themselves each at the foot of a hickory and wait for the squirrels. They found two large hickory trees not too far apart, and took their positions each on the ground, with his back to a tree.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

It was very dull, waiting, and a half-whispered colloquy was passing between them as to the advisability of giving it up, when a faint "cranch, cranch, cranch," sounded in the dry leaves. At first the boys thought it was a squirrel, and both of them grasped their guns. Then the sound came again, but this time there appeared to be, not one, but a number of animals, rustling slowly along.

"What is it?" asked Frank of Willy, whose tree was a little nearer the direction from which the sound came.

"'Tain't anything but some cows or sheep, I believe," said Willy, in a disappointed tone. The look of interest died out of Frank's face, but he still kept his eyes in the direction of the sound, which was now very distinct. The underbrush, however, was too thick for them to see anything. At length Willy rose and pushed his way rapidly through the bushes toward the animals. There was a sudden "oof, oof," and Frank heard them rushing back down through the woods toward the marsh.

"Somebody's hogs," he muttered, in disgust.

"Frank! Frank!" called Willy, in a most excited tone.

"What?"

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“It’s the old spotted sow, and she’s got a lot of pigs with her—great big shoats, nearly grown!”

Frank sprang up and ran through the bushes.

“At least six of ’em!”

“Let’s follow ’em!”

“All right.”

The boys, stooping their heads, struck out through the bushes in the direction from which the yet retreating animals could still be heard.

“Let’s shoot ’em.”

“All right.”

On they kept as hard as they could. What great news it was! What royal game!

“It’s like hunting wild boars, is n’t it?” shouted Willy, joyfully.

They followed the track left by the animals in the leaves kicked up in their mad flight. It led down over the hill, through the thicket, and came to an end at the marsh which marked the beginning of the swamp. Beyond that it could not be traced; but it was evident that the wild hogs had taken refuge in the impenetrable recesses of the marsh which was their home.

XI

AFTER circling the edge of the swamp for some time the boys, as it was now growing late, turned toward home. They were full of their valuable discovery, and laid all sorts of plans for the capture of the hogs. They would not tell even their mother, as they wished to surprise her. They were, of course, familiar with all the modes of trapping game, as described in the story books, and they discussed them all. The easiest way to get the hogs was to shoot them, and this would be the most "fun;" but it would never do, for the meat would spoil. When they reached home they hunted up Uncle Balla and told him about their discovery. He was very much inclined to laugh at them. The hogs they had seen were nothing, he told them, but some of the neighbors' hogs which had wandered into the woods.

When the boys went to bed they talked it over once more, and determined that next day they would thoroughly explore the woods and the swamp also, as far as they could.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

The following afternoon, therefore, they set out, and made immediately for that part of the woods where they had seen and heard the hogs the day before. One of them carried a gun and the other a long jumping-pole. After finding the trail they followed it straight down to the swamp.

Rolling their trousers up above their knees, they waded boldly in, selecting an opening between the bushes which looked like a hog-path. They proceeded slowly, for the briers were so thick in many places that they could hardly make any progress at all when they neared the branch. So they turned and worked their way painfully down the stream. At last, however, they reached a place where the brambles and bushes seemed to form a perfect wall before them. It was impossible to get through.

"Let's go home," said Willy. "'Tain't any use to try to get through there. My legs are scratched all to pieces now."

"Let's try and get out here," said Frank, and he turned from the wall of brambles. They crept along, springing from hummock to hummock. Presently they came to a spot where the oozy mud extended at least eight or ten feet before the next tuft of grass.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

"How am I to get the gun across?" asked Willy, dolefully.

"That's a fact! It's too far to throw it, even with the caps off."

At length they concluded to go back for a piece of log they had seen, and to throw this down so as to lessen the distance.

They pulled the log out of the sand, carried it to the muddy spot, and threw it into the mud where they wanted it.

Frank stuck his pole down and felt until he had what he thought a secure hold on it, fixed his eye on the tuft of grass beyond, and sprang into air.

As he jumped the pole slipped from its insecure support into the miry mud, and Frank, instead of landing on the hummock for which he had aimed, lost his direction, and soused flat on his side with a loud "spa-lash," in the water and mud three feet to the left.

He was a queer object as he staggered to his feet in the quagmire; but at the instant a loud "oof, oof," came from the thicket, not a dozen yards away, and the whole herd of hogs, roused, by his fall, from slumber in their muddy lair, dashed away through the swamp with "oofs" of fear.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“There they go, there they go!” shouted both boys, eagerly,—Willy, in his excitement, splashing across the perilous-looking quagmire, and finding it not so deep as it had looked.

“There ’s where they go in and out,” exclaimed Frank, pointing to a low round opening, not more than eighteen inches high, a little further beyond them, which formed an arch in the almost solid wall of brambles surrounding the place.

As it was now late they returned home, resolving to wait until the next afternoon before taking any further steps. There was not a pound of bacon to be obtained anywhere in the country for love or money, and the flock of sheep was almost gone.

Their mother’s anxiety as to means for keeping her dependents from starving was so great that the boys were on the point of telling her what they knew; and when they heard her wishing she had a few hogs to fatten, they could scarcely keep from letting her know their plans. At last they had to jump up, and run out of the room.

Next day the boys each hunted up a pair of old boots which they had used the winter before. The leather was so dry and worn that the boots

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

hurt their growing feet cruelly, but they brought the boots along to put on when they reached the swamp. This time, each took a gun, and they also carried an axe, for now they had determined on a plan for capturing the hogs.

"I wish we had let Peter and Cole come," said Willy, dolefully, sitting on the butt end of a log they had cut, and wiping his face on his sleeve.

"Or had asked Uncle Balla to help us," added Frank.

"They 'd be certain to tell all about it."

"Yes; so they would."

They settled down in silence, and panted.

"I tell you what we ought to do! Bait the hog-path, as you would for fish." This was the suggestion of the angler, Frank.

"With what?"

"Acorns."

The acorns were tolerably plentiful around the roots of the big oaks, so the boys set to work to pick them up. It was an easier job than cutting the log, and it was not long before each had his hat full.

As they started down to the swamp, Frank exclaimed, suddenly, "Look there, Willy!"

Willy looked, and not fifty yards away, with their ends resting on old stumps, were three or

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

four "hacks," or piles of rails, which had been mauled the season before and left there, probably having been forgotten or overlooked.

Willy gave a hurrah, while bending under the weight of a large rail.

At the spot where the hog-path came out of the thicket they commenced to build their trap.

First they laid a floor of rails; then they built a pen, five or six rails high, which they strengthened with "outriders." When the pen was finished, they pried up the side nearest the thicket, from the bottom rail, about a foot; that is, high enough for the animals to enter. This they did by means of two rails, using one as a fulcrum and one as a lever, having shortened them enough to enable the work to be done from inside the pen.

The lever they pulled down at the farther end until it touched the bottom of the trap, and fastened it by another rail, a thin one, run at right-angles to the lever, and across the pen. This would slip easily when pushed away from the gap, and needed to be moved only about an inch to slip from the end of the lever and release it; the weight of the pen would then close the gap. Behind this rail the acorns were to be thrown; and the hogs, in trying to get the bait,

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

would push the rail, free the lever or trigger, and the gap would be closed by the fall of the pen when the lever was released.

It was nearly night when the boys finished.

They scattered a portion of the acorns for bait along the path and up into the pen, to toll the hogs in. The rest they strewed inside the pen, beyond their sliding rail.

They could scarcely tear themselves away from the pen; but it was so late they had to hurry home.

Next day was Sunday. But Monday morning, by daylight, they were up and went out with their guns, apparently to hunt squirrels. They went, however, straight to their trap. As they approached they thought they heard the hogs grunting in the pen. Willy was sure of it; and they ran as hard as they could. But there were no hogs there. After going every morning and evening for two weeks, there never had been even an acorn missed, so they stopped their visits.

Peter and Cole found out about the pen, and then the servants learned of it, and the boys were joked and laughed at unmercifully.

"I believe them boys is distracted," said old Balla, in the kitchen; "settin' a pen in them

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

woods for to ketch hogs,—with the gap open! Think hogs goin' stay in pen with gap open—ef any wuz dyah to went in!”

“Well, you come out and help us hunt for them,” said the boys to the old driver.

“Go 'way, boy, I ain' got time foolin' wid you chillern, buildin' pen in swamp. There ain't no hogs in them woods, onless they got in dyah sence las' fall.”

“You saw 'em, did n't you, Willy?” declared Frank.

“Yes, I did.”

“Go 'way. Don't you know, ef that old sow had been in them woods the boys would have got her up las' fall—an' ef they had n't, she 'd come up long befo' this?”

“Mister Hall ketch you boys puttin' his hogs up in pen, he 'll teck you up,” said Lucy Ann, in her usual teasing way.

This was too much for the boys to stand after all they had done. Uncle Balla must be right. They would have to admit it. The hogs must have belonged to some one else. And their mother was in such desperate straits about meat!

Lucy Ann's last shot, about catching Mr. Hall's hogs, took effect; and the boys agreed

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

that they would go out some afternoon and pull the pen down.

The next afternoon they took their guns, and started out on a squirrel-hunt.

They did not have much luck, however.

"Let's go by there, and pull the old pen down," said Frank, as they started homeward from the far side of the woods.

"It's out of the way,—let the old thing rip."

"We 'd better pull it down. If a hog were to be caught there, it would n't do."

"I wish he would!—but there ain't any hogs going to get caught," growled Willy.

"He might starve to death."

This suggestion persuaded Willy, who could not bear to have anything suffer.

So they sauntered down toward the swamp.

As they approached it, a squirrel ran up a tree, and both boys were after it in a second. They were standing, one on each side of the tree, gazing up, trying to get a sight of the little animal among the gray branches, when a sound came to the ears of both of them at the same moment.

"What's that?" both asked together.

"It's hogs, grunting."

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

"No, they are fighting. They are in the swamp. Let's run," said Willy.

"No; we'll scare them away. They may be near the trap," was Frank's prudent suggestion. "Let's creep up."

"I hear young pigs squealing. Do you think they are ours?"

The squirrel was left, flattened out and trembling on top of a large limb, and the boys stole down the hill toward the pen. The hogs were not in sight, though they could be heard grunting and scuffling. They crept closer. Willy crawled through a thick clump of bushes, and sprang to his feet with a shout. "We've got 'em! We've got 'em!" he cried, running toward the pen, followed by Frank.

Sure enough! There they were, fast in the pen, fighting and snorting to get out, and tearing around with the bristles high on their round backs, the old sow and seven large young hogs; while a litter of eight little pigs, as the boys ran up, squeezed through the rails, and, squealing, dashed away into the grass.

The hogs were almost frantic at the sight of the boys, and rushed madly at the sides of the pen; but the boys had made it too strong to be broken.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

After gazing at their capture awhile, and piling a few more outriders on the corners of the pen to make it more secure, the two trappers rushed home. They dashed breathless and panting into their mother's room, shouting, "We've got 'em!—we've got 'em!" and, seizing her, began to dance up and down with her.

In a little while the whole plantation was aware of the capture, and old Balla was sent out with them to look at the hogs to make sure they did not belong to some one else,—as he insisted they did. The boys went with him. It was quite dark when he returned, but as he came in the proof of the boys' success was written on his face. He was in a broad grin. To his mistress's inquiry he replied, "Yes, 'm they's got 'em, sho' 'nough. They 's the beatenes' boys!"

For some time afterward he would every now and then break into a chuckle of amused content and exclaim, "Them's right smart chillern." And at Christmas, when the hogs were killed, this was the opinion of the whole plantation.

XII

THE gibes of Lucy Ann, and the occasional little thrusts of Hugh about the "deserter business," continued and kept the boys stirred up. At length they could stand it no longer. It was decided between them that they must retrieve their reputations by capturing a real deserter and turning him over to the conscript-officer whose office was at the depot.

Accordingly, one Saturday they started out on an expedition, the object of which was to capture a deserter though they should die in the attempt.

The conscript-guard had been unusually active lately, and it was said that several deserters had been caught.

The boys turned in at their old road, and made their way into Holetown. Their guns were loaded with large slugs, and they felt the ardor of battle thrill them as they marched along down the narrow roadway. They were trudging on when they were hailed by name from behind. Turning,

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

they saw their friend Tim Mills, coming along at the same slouching gait in which he always walked. His old single-barrel gun was thrown across his arm, and he looked a little rustier than on the day he had shared their lunch. The boys held a little whispered conversation, and decided on a treaty of friendship.

“Good-mornin’,” he said, on coming up to them. “How’s your ma?”

“Good-morning. She’s right well.”

“What y’ all doin’? Huntin’ d’serters agin?” he asked.

“Yes. Come on and help us catch them.”

“No; I can’t do that—exactly;—but I tell you what I *can* do. I can tell you whar one is!”

The boys’ faces glowed. “All right!”

“Let me see,” he began, reflectively, chewing a stick. “Does y’ all know Billy Johnson?”

The boys did not know him.

“You sure you don’t know him? He ’s a tall, long fellow, ’bout forty years old, and breshes his hair mighty slick; got a big nose, and a gap-tooth, and a mustache. He lives down in the lower neighborhood.”

Even after this description the boys failed to recognize him.

“Well, he ’s the feller. I can tell you right

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

whar he is, this minute. He did me a mean trick, an' I 'm gwine to give him up. Come along."

"What did he do to you?" inquired the boys, as they followed him down the road.

"Why—he—; but 't 's no use to be rakin' it up ag'in. You know he always passes hisself off as one o' the conscrip'-guards,—that 's his dodge. Like as not, that 's what he 's gwine try and put off on y' all now; but don't you let him fool you."

"We 're not going to," said the boys.

"He rigs hisself up in a uniform—jes' like as not he stole it, too,—an' goes roun' foolin' people, meckin' out he 's such a soldier. If he fools with me, I 'm gwine to finish him!" Here Tim gripped his gun fiercely.

The boys promised not to be fooled by the wily Johnson. All they asked was to have him pointed out to them.

"Don't you let him put up any game on you 'bout bein' a conscrip'-guard hisself," continued their friend.

"No, indeed we won't. We are obliged to you for telling us."

"He ain't so very fur from here. He 's mighty tecken up with John Hall's gal, and is

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

tryin' to meck out like he 's Gen'l Lee hisself, an' she ain't got no mo' sense than to b'lieve him."

"Why, we heard, Mr. Mills, she was going to marry *you*."

"Oh, no, *I* ain't a good enough soldier for her; she wants to marry *Gen'l Lee*."

The boys laughed at his dry tone.

As they walked along they consulted how the capture should be made.

"I tell you how to take him," said their companion. "He is a monstrous coward, and all you got to do is jest to bring your guns down on him. I would n't shoot him—'nless he tried to run; but if he did that, when he got a little distance I 'd pepper him about his legs. Make him give up his sword and pistol and don't let him ride; 'cause if you do, he 'll git away. Make him walk—the rascal!"

The boys promised to carry out these kindly suggestions.

They soon came in sight of the little house where Mills said the deserter was. A soldier's horse was standing tied at the gate, with a sword hung from the saddle. The owner, in full uniform, was sitting on the porch.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“I can’t go any furdur,” whispered their friend; “but that ’s him—that ’s ‘Gen’l Lee’—the triflin’ scoundrel!—loafin’ ’roun’ here ’sted o’ goin’ in the army! I b’lieve y’ all is ’fraid to take him,” eying the boys suspiciously.

“No, we ain’t; you ’ll see,” said both boys, fired at the doubt.

“All right; I ’m goin’ to wait right here and watch you. Go ahead.”

The boys looked at the guns to see if they were all right, and marched up the road keeping their eyes on the enemy. It was agreed that Frank was to do the talking and give the orders.

They said not a word until they reached the gate. They could see a young woman moving about in the house, setting a table. At the gate they stopped, so as to prevent the man from getting to his horse.

The soldier eyed them curiously. “I wonder whose boys they is?” he said to himself. “They ’s certainly actin’ comical! Playin’ soldiers, I reckon.”

“Cock your gun—easy,” said Frank, in a low tone, suiting his own action to the word.

Willy obeyed.

“Come out here, if you please,” Frank called to the man. He could not keep his voice from

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

shaking a little, but the man rose and lounged out toward them. His prompt compliance reassured them.

They stood, gripping their guns and watching him as he advanced.

"Come outside the gate!" He did as Frank said.

"What do you want?" he asked impatiently.

"You are our prisoner," said Frank, sternly, dropping down his gun with the muzzle toward the captive, and giving a glance at Willy to see that he was supported.

"Your *what*? What do you mean?"

"We arrest you as a deserter."

How proud Willy was of Frank!

"Go 'way from here; I ain't no deserter. I 'm a-huntin' for deserters, myself," the man replied, laughing.

Frank smiled at Willy with a nod, as much as to say, "You see,—just what Tim told us!"

"Ain't your name Mr. Billy Johnson?"

"Yes; that 's my name."

"You are the man we 're looking for. March down that road. But don't run,— if you do, we 'll shoot you!"

As the boys seemed perfectly serious and the muzzles of both guns were pointing directly at

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

him, the man began to think that they were in earnest. But he could hardly credit his senses. A suspicion flashed into his mind.

“Look here, boys,” he said, rather angrily. “I don’t want any of your foolin’ with me. I ’m too old to play with children. If you all don’t go ’long home and stop giving me impudence, I ’ll slap you over!” He started angrily toward Frank. As he did so, Frank brought the gun to his shoulder.

“Stand back!” he said, looking along the barrel, right into the man’s eyes. “If you move a step, I ’ll blow your head off!”

The soldier’s jaw fell. He stopped and threw up his arm before his eyes.

“Hold on!” he called, “don’t shoot! Boys, ain’t you got better sense ’n that?”

“March on down that road. Willy, you get the horse,” said Frank, decidedly.

The soldier glanced over toward the house. The voice of the young woman was heard singing a war song in a high key.

“Ef Millindy sees me, I ’m a goner,” he reflected. “Jes come down the road a little piece, will you?” he asked, persuasively.

“No talking,—march!” ordered Frank.

He looked at each of the boys; the guns still

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

kept their perilous direction. The boys' eyes looked fiery to his surprised senses.

"Who is y' all?" he asked.

"We are two little Confederates! That 's who we are," said Willy.

"Is any of your parents ever—ever been in a asylum?" he asked, as calmly as he could.

"That 's none of your business," said Captain Frank. "March on!"

The man cast a despairing glance toward the house, where "The years" were "creeping slowly by, Lorena," in a very high pitch,—and then moved on.

"I hope she ain't seen nothin'," he thought. "If I jest can git them guns away from 'em——"

Frank followed close behind him with his old gun held ready for need, and Willy untied the horse and led it. The bushes concealed them from the dwelling.

As soon as they were well out of sight of the house, Frank gave the order:

"Halt!" They all halted.

"Willy, tie the horse." It was done.

"I wonder if those boys is thinkin' 'bout shootin' me?" thought the soldier, turning and putting his hand on his pistol.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

As he did so, Frank's gun came to his shoulder.

"Throw up your hands or you are a dead man." The hands went up.

"Willy, keep your gun on him, while I search him for any weapons." Willy cocked the old musket and brought it to bear on the prisoner.

"Little boy, don't handle that thing so reckless," the man expostulated. "Ef that musket was to go off, it might kill me!"

"No talking," demanded Frank, going up to him. "Hold up your hands. Willy, shoot him if he moves."

Frank drew a long pistol from its holster with an air of business. He searched carefully, but there was no more.

The fellow gritted his teeth. "If she ever hears of *this*, Tim 's got her certain," he groaned; "but she won't never hear."

At a turn in the road his heart sank within him; for just around the curve they came upon Tim Mills sitting quietly on a stump. He looked at them with a quizzical eye, but said not a word.

The prisoner's face was a study when he recognized his rival and enemy. As Mills did not move, his courage returned.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Good mornin’, Tim,” he said, with great politeness.

The man on the stump said nothing; he only looked on with complacent enjoyment.

“Tim, is these two boys crazy?” he asked slowly.

“They ’re crazy ’bout shootin’ deserters,” replied Tim.

“Tim, tell ’em I ain’t no deserter.” His voice was full of entreaty.

“Well, if you ain’t a d’serter, what you doin’ outn the army?”

“You know——” began the fellow fiercely; but Tim shifted his long single-barrel lazily into his hand and looked the man straight in the eyes, and the prisoner stopped.

“Yes, I know,” said Tim with a sudden spark in his eyes. “An’ *you* know,” he added after a pause, during which his face resumed its usual listless look. “An’ my edvice to you is to go ’long with them boys, if you don’t want to git three loads of slugs in you. They *may* put ’em in you anyway. They ’s sort of ’stracted ’bout d’serters, and I can swear to it.” He touched his forehead expressively.

“March on!” said Frank.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

The prisoner, grinding his teeth, moved forward, followed by his guards.

As the enemies parted each man sent the same ugly look after the other.

“It ’s all over! He ’s got her,” groaned Johnson. As they passed out of sight, Mills rose and sauntered somewhat briskly (for him) in the direction of John Hall’s.

They soon reached a little stream, not far from the depot where the provost-guard was stationed. On its banks the man made his last stand; but his obstinacy brought a black muzzle close to his head with a stern little face behind it, and he was fain to march straight through the water, as he was ordered.

Just as he was emerging on the other bank, with his boots full of water and his trousers dripping, closely followed by Frank brandishing his pistol, a small body of soldiers rode up. They were the conscript-guard. Johnson’s look was despairing.

“Why, Billy, what in thunder——? Thought you were sick in bed!”

Another minute and the soldiers took in the situation by instinct—and Johnson’s rage was drowned in the universal explosion of laughter.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

The boys had captured a member of the conscript-guard.

In the midst of all, Frank and Willy, overwhelmed by their ridiculous error, took to their heels as hard as they could, and the last sounds that reached them were the roars of the soldiers as the scampering boys disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Johnson went back, in a few days, to see John Hall's daughter; but the young lady declared she would n't marry any man who let two boys make him wade through a creek; and a month or two later she married Tim Mills.

To all the gibes he heard on the subject of his capture, and they were many, Johnson made but one reply:

“Them boys 's had parents in a a—sylum, *sure!*”

XIII

IT was now nearing the end of the third year of the war. Hugh was seventeen, and was eager to go into the army. His mother would have liked to keep him at home; but she felt that it was her duty not to withhold anything, and Colonel Marshall offered Hugh a place with him. So a horse was bought; and Hugh went to Richmond and came back with a uniform and a sabre. The boys truly thought that General Lee himself was not so imposing or so great a soldier as Hugh. They followed him about like two pet dogs, and when he sat down they stood and gazed at him adoringly.

When Hugh rode away to the army it was harder to part with him than they had expected; and though he had left them his gun and dog, to console them during his absence, it was difficult to keep from crying. Everyone on the plantation was moved. Uncle Balla, who up to the last moment had been very lively attending to the horse, as the young soldier galloped away sank

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

down on the end of the steps of the office, and, dropping his hands on his knees, followed Hugh with his eyes until he disappeared over the hill. The old driver said nothing, but his face expressed a great deal.

The boys' mother cried a great deal, but it was generally when she was by herself.

"She 's afraid Hugh 'll be kilt," Willy said to Uncle Balla, in explanation of her tears,—the old servant having remarked that he "b'lieved she cried more when Hugh went away, than she did when Marse John and Marse William both went."

"Hi! war n't she 'fred they 'll be kilt, too?" he asked in some scorn.

This was beyond Willy's logic, so he pondered over it.

"Yes, but she 's afraid Hugh 'll be kilt, as *well* as them," he said finally, as the best solution of the problem.

It did not seem to wholly satisfy Uncle Balla's mind, for when he moved off he said, as though talking to himself:

"She sutn'ey is 'sot' on that boy. He 'll be a gen'l hisself, the first thing she know."

There was a bond of sympathy between Uncle Balla and his mistress which did not exist so

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

strongly between her and any of the other servants. It was due perhaps to the fact that he was the companion and friend of her boys.

That winter the place where the army went into winter-quarters was some distance from Oakland; but the young officers used to ride over, from time to time, two or three together, and stay for a day or two.

Times were harder than they had been before, but the young people were as gay as ever.

The colonel, who had been dreadfully wounded in the summer, had been made a brigadier-general for gallantry. Hugh had received a slight wound in the same action. The General had written to the boy's mother about him; but he had not been home. The General had gone back to his command. He had never been to Oakland since he was wounded.

One evening, the boys had just teased their Cousin Belle into reading them their nightly portion of "The Talisman," as they sat before a bright lightwood fire, when two horsemen galloped up to the gate, their horses splashed with mud from fetlocks to ears. In a second, Lucy Ann dashed headlong into the room, with her teeth gleaming:

"Here Marse Hugh, out here!"

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

There was a scamper to the door—the boys first, shouting at the tops of their voices, Cousin Belle next, and Lucy Ann close at her heels.

“Who ’s with him, Lucy Ann?” asked Miss Belle, as they reached the passage-way, and heard several voices outside.

“The Cunnel’s with ’im.”

The young lady turned and fled up the steps as fast as she could.

“You see I brought my welcome with me,” said the General, addressing the boy’s mother, and laying his hand on his young aide’s shoulder, as they stood, a little later, “thawing out” by the roaring log-fire in the sitting-room.

“You always bring that; but you are doubly welcome for bringing this young soldier back to me,” said she, putting her arm affectionately around her son.

Just then the boys came rushing in from taking the horses to the stable. They made a dive toward the fire to warm their little chapped hands.

“I told you Hugh war n’t as tall as the General,” said Frank, across the hearth to Willy.

“Who said he was?”

“You!”

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

"I did n't."

"You did."

They were a contradictory pair of youngsters, and their voices, pitched in a youthful treble, were apt in discussion to strike a somewhat higher key; but it did not follow that they were in an ill-humor merely because they contradicted each other.

"What did you say, if you did n't say that?" insisted Frank.

"I said he *looked* as if he *thought* himself as tall as the General," declared Willy, defiantly, oblivious in his excitement of the eldest brother's presence. There was a general laugh at Hugh's confusion; but Hugh had carried an order across a field under a hot fire, and had brought a regiment up in the nick of time, riding by its colonel's side in a charge which had changed the issue of the fight, and had a sabre wound in the arm to show for it. He could therefore afford to pass over such an accusation with a little tweak of Willy's ear.

"Where is Cousin Belle?" asked Frank.

"I s'peck she 's putting on her fine clothes for the General to see. Did n't she run when she heard he was here!"

"Willy!" said his mother, reprovingly.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Well, she did, Ma.”

His mother shook her head at him; but the General put his hand on the boy, and drew him closer.

“You say she ran?” he asked, with a pleasant light in his eyes.

“Yes, siree; she did *that*.”

Just then the door opened, and their Cousin Belle entered the room. She looked perfectly beautiful. The greetings were very cordial—to Hugh especially. She threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him.

“You young hero!” she cried. “Oh, Hugh, I am so proud of you!”—kissing him again, and laughing at him, with her face glowing, and her big brown eyes full of light. “Where were you wounded? Oh! I was so frightened when I heard about it!”

“Where was it? Show it to us, Hugh; please do,” exclaimed both boys at once, jumping around him, and pulling at his arm.

“Oh, Hugh, is it still very painful?” asked his cousin, her pretty face filled with sudden sympathy.

“Oh! no, it was nothing—nothing but a scratch,” said Hugh, shaking the boys off, his expression being divided between feigned in-

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

difference and sheepishness, at this praise in the presence of his chief.

“No such thing, Miss Belle,” put in the General, glad of the chance to secure her commendation. “It might have been very serious, and it was a splendid ride he made.”

“Were you not ashamed of yourself to send him into such danger?” she said, turning on him suddenly. “Why did you not go yourself?”

The young man laughed. Her beauty entranced him. He had scars enough to justify him in keeping silence under her pretended reproach.

“Well, you see, I could n’t leave the place where I was. I had to send some one, and I knew Hugh would do it. He led the regiment after the colonel and major fell—and he did it splendidly, too.”

There was a chorus from the young lady and the boys together.

“Oh, Hugh, you hear what he says!” exclaimed the former, turning to her cousin. “Oh, I am so glad that he thinks so!” Then, recollecting that she was paying him the highest compliment, she suddenly began to blush, and turned once more to him. “Well, you talk as if

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

you were surprised. Did you expect anything else?"

There was a fine scorn in her voice, if it had been real.

"Certainly not; you are all too clever at making an attack," he said coolly, looking her in the eyes. "But I have heard even of *your* running away," he added, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"When?" she asked quickly, with a little guilty color deepening in her face as she glanced at the boys. "I never did."

"Oh, she did!" exclaimed both boys in a breath, breaking in, now that the conversation was within their range. You ought to have seen her. She just *flew!*" exclaimed Frank.

The girl made a rush at the offender to stop him.

"He does n't know what he is talking about," she said, roguishly, over her shoulder.

"Yes, he does," called the other. "She was standing at the foot of the steps when you all came, and—oo—oo—oo—" the rest was lost as his cousin placed her hand close over his mouth.

"Here! here! run away! You are too dangerous. They don't know what they are talking about," she said, throwing a glance toward the

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

young officer, who was keenly enjoying her confusion. Her hand slipped from Willie's mouth and he went on. "And when she heard it was you, she just clapped her hands and ran—oo—oo—umm."

"Here, Hugh, put them out," she said to that young man, who, glad to do her bidding, seized both miscreants by their arms and carried them out, closing the door after them.

Hugh bore the boys into the dining-room, where he kept them until supper-time.

After supper, the rest of the family dispersed, and the boys' mother invited them to come with her and Hugh to her own room, though they were eager to go and see the General, and were much troubled lest he should think their mother was rude in leaving him.

CHAPTER XIV

THE next day was Sunday. The General and Hugh had but one day to stay. They were to leave at daybreak the following morning. They thoroughly enjoyed their holiday; at least the boys knew that Hugh did. They had never known him so affable with them. They did not see much of the General, after breakfast. He seemed to like to stay "stuck up in the house" all the time, talking to Cousin Belle; the boys thought this due to his lameness. Something had occurred, the boys did n't understand just what; but the General was on an entirely new footing with all of them, and their Cousin Belle was in some way concerned in the change. She did not any longer run from the General, and it seemed to them as though everyone acted as if he belonged to her. The boys did not altogether like the state of affairs. That afternoon, however, he and their Cousin Belle let the boys go out walking with them, and he was just as hearty as he could be; he made them tell him all about capturing the deserter, and about catching

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

the hogs, and everything they did. They told him all about their "Robber's Cave," down in the woods near where an old house had stood. It was between two ravines near a spring they had found. They had fixed up the "cave" with boards and old pieces of carpet "and everything," and they told him, as a secret, how to get to it through the pines without leaving a trail. He had to give the holy pledge of the "Brotherhood" before this could be divulged to him; but he took it with a solemnity which made the boys almost forgive the presence of their Cousin Belle. It was a little awkward at first that she was present; but as the "Constitution" provided only as to admitting men to the mystic knowledge, saying nothing about women, this difficulty was, on the General's suggestion, passed over, and the boys fully explained the location of the spot, and how to get there by turning off abruptly from the path through the big woods right at the pine thicket, —and all the rest of the way.

" 'T ain't a 'sure-enough' cave," explained Willy; "but it 's 'most as good as one. The old rock fire-place is just like a cave."

"The gullies are so deep you can't get there except that one way," declared Frank.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Even the Yankees could n’t find you there,” asserted Willy.

“I don’t believe anybody could, after that; but I trust they will never have to try,” laughed their Cousin Belle, with an anxious look in her bright eyes at the mere thought.

That night they were at supper, about eight o’clock, when something out-of-doors attracted the attention of the party around the table. It was a noise,—a something indefinable, but the talk and mirth stopped suddenly, and everybody listened.

There was a call, and the hurried steps of some one running, just outside the door, and Lucy Ann burst into the room, her face ashy pale.

“The yard ’s full o’ mens—Yankees,” she gasped, just as the General and Hugh rose from the table.

“How many are there?” asked both gentlemen.

“They ’s all ’roun’ the house ev’y which a-way.”

The General looked at his sweetheart. She came to his side with a cry.

“Go up-stairs to the top of the house,” called the boys’ mother.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“We can hide you; come with us,” said the boys.

“Go up the back way, Frank ’n’ Willy, to you-all’s den,” whispered Lucy Ann.

“That ’s where we are going,” said the boys as she went out.

“You all come on!” This to the General and Hugh.

“The rest of you take your seats,” said the boys’ mother.

All this had occupied only a few seconds. The soldiers followed the boys out by a side-door and dashed up the narrow stairs to the second-story just as a thundering knocking came at the front door. It was as dark as pitch, for candles were too scarce to burn more than one at a time.

“You run back,” said Hugh to the boys, as they groped along. “There are too many of us. I know the way.”

But it was too late; the noise down-stairs told that the enemy was already in the house!

As the soldiers left the supper-room, the boys’ mother had hastily removed two plates from the places and set two chairs back against the wall; she made the rest fill up the spaces, so that there

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

was nothing to show that the two men had been there.

She had hardly taken her seat again, when the sound of heavy footsteps at the door announced the approach of the enemy. She herself rose and went to the door; but it was thrown open before she reached it and an officer in full Federal uniform strode in, followed by several men.

The commander was a tall young fellow, not older than the General. The lady started back somewhat startled, and there was a confused chorus of exclamations of alarm from the rest of those at the table. The officer, finding himself in the presence of ladies, removed his cap with a polite bow.

"I hope, madam, that you ladies will not be alarmed," he said. "You need be under no apprehension, I assure you." Even while speaking, his eye had taken a hasty survey of the room:

"We desire to see General Marshall, who is at present in this house, and I am sorry to have to include your son in my requisition. We know that they are here, and if they are given us, I promise you that nothing shall be disturbed."

"You appear to be so well instructed that I

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

can add little to your information," said the mistress of the house, haughtily. "I am glad to say, however, that I hardly think you will find them."

"Madam, I know they are here," said the young soldier positively, but with great politeness. "I have positive information to that effect. They arrived last evening and have not left since. Their horses are still in the stable. I am sorry to be forced to do violence to my feelings, but I must search the house. Come, men."

"I doubt not you have found their horses," began the lady, but she was interrupted by Lucy Ann, who entered at the moment with a plate of fresh corn-cakes, and caught the last part of the sentence.

"Come along, Mister," she said, "I 'll show you myself," and she set down her plate, took the candle from the table, and walked to the door, followed by the soldiers.

"Lucy Ann!" exclaimed her mistress; but she was too much amazed at the girl's conduct to say more.

"I know whar dey is!" Lucy Ann continued, taking no notice of her mistress. They heard her say, as she was shutting the door, "Y' all

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

come with me; I 'feared they gone; ef they ain't, I know whar they is!"

"Open every room," said the officer.

"Oh, yes, sir; I gwine ketch 'em for you," she said, eagerly opening first one door, and then the other, "that is, ef they ain' gone. I mighty 'feared they gone. I seen 'em goin' out the back way about a little while befo' you all come,—but I thought they might 'a' come back. Mister, ken y' all teck me 'long with you when you go?" she asked the officer, in a low voice. "I want to be free."

"I don't know; we can some other time, if not now. We are going to set you all free."

"Oh, glory! Come 'long, Mister; let 's ketch 'em. They ain't heah, but I know whar dey is."

The soldiers closely examined every place where it was possible a man could be concealed, until they had been over all the lower part of the house.

Lucy Ann stopped. "Dey 's gone!" she said positively.

The officer motioned to her to go up-stairs.

"Yes, sir, I wuz jes' goin' tell you we jes' well look up-stairs, too," she said, leading the way, talking all the time, and shading the flickering candle with her hand.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

The little group, flat on the floor against the wall in their dark retreat, could now hear her voice distinctly. She was speaking in a confidential undertone, as if afraid of being overheard.

"I wonder I did n't have sense to get somebody to watch 'em when they went out," they heard her say.

"She 's betrayed us!" whispered Hugh.

The General merely said, "Hush," and laid his hand firmly on the nearest boy to keep him still. Lucy Ann led the soldiers into the various chambers one after another. At last she opened the next room, and, through the wall, the men in hiding heard the soldiers go in and walk about.

They estimated that there were at least half-a-dozen.

"Is n't there a garret?" asked one of the searching party.

"No, sir, 't ain't no garret, jes' a loft; but they ain't up there," said Lucy Ann's voice.

"We 'll look for ourselves." They came out of the room. "Show us the way."

"Look here, if you tell us a lie, we 'll hang you!"

The voice of the officer was very stern.

"I ain't gwine tell you no lie, Mister. What

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

you reckon I wan' tell you lie for? Dey ain't in the garret, I know, ——Mister, please don't p'int dem things at me. I 's 'feared o' dem things," said the girl in a slightly whimpering voice; "I gwine show you."

She came straight down the passage toward the recess where the fugitives were huddled, the men after her, their heavy steps echoing through the house. The boys were trembling violently. The light, as the searchers came nearer, fell on the wall, crept along it, until it lighted up the whole alcove, except where they lay. The boys held their breath. They could hear their hearts thumping.

Lucy Ann stepped into the recess with her candle, and looked straight at them.

"They ain't in here," she exclaimed, suddenly putting her hand up before the flame, as if to prevent it flaring, thus throwing the alcove once more into darkness. "The trap door to the garret 's 'roun' that a-way," she said to the soldiers, still keeping her position at the narrow entrance, as if to let them pass. When they had all passed, she followed them.

The boys began to wriggle with delight, but the General's strong hand kept them still.

Naturally, the search in the garret proved

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

fruitless, and the hiding-party heard the squad swearing over their ill-luck as they came back; while Lucy Ann loudly lamented not having sent some one to follow the fugitives, and made a number of suggestions as to where they had gone, and the probability of catching them if the soldiers went at once in pursuit.

“Did you look in here?” asked a soldier approaching the alcove.

“Yes, sir; they ain’t in there.” She snuffed the candle out suddenly with her fingers. “Oh, oh!—my light done gone out! Mind! Let me go in front and show you the way,” she said; and, pressing before, she once more led them along the passage.

“Mind yo’ steps; ken you see?” she asked.

They went down-stairs, while Lucy Ann gave them minute directions as to how they might catch “Marse Hugh an’ the Gen’l” at a certain place a half-mile from the house (an unoccupied quarter), which she carefully described.

A further investigation ensued down-stairs, but in a little while the searchers went out of the house. Their tone had changed since their disappointment, and loud threats floated up the dark stairway to the prisoners still crouching in the little recess.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

In a few minutes the boys' Cousin Belle came rushing up-stairs.

"Now 's your time! Come quick," she called; "they will be back directly. Is n't she an angel!" The whole party sprang to their feet, and ran down to the lower floor.

"Oh, we were so frightened!" "Don't let them see you." "Make haste," were the exclamations that greeted them as the two soldiers said their good-byes and prepared to leave the house.

"Go out by the side-door; that 's your only chance. It 's pitch-dark, and the bushes will hide you. But where are you going?"

"We are going to the boys' cave," said the General, buckling on his pistol; "I know the way, and we 'll get away as soon as these fellows leave, if we cannot before."

"God bless you!" said the ladies, pushing them away in dread of the enemy's return.

"Come on, General," called Hugh in an undertone. The General was lagging behind a minute to say good-bye once more. He stooped suddenly and kissed the boys' Cousin Belle before them all.

"Good-bye. God bless you!" and he followed

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

Hugh out of the window into the darkness. The girl burst into tears and ran up to her room.

A few seconds afterward the house was once more filled with the enemy, growling at their ill-luck in having so narrowly missed the prize.

“We ’ll catch ’em yet,” said the leader.

XV.

THE raiders were up early next morning scouring the woods and country around. They knew that the fugitive soldiers could not have gone far, for the Federals had every road picketed, and their main body was not far away. As the morning wore on, it became a grave question at Oakland how the two soldiers were to subsist. They had no provisions with them, and the roads were so closely watched that there was no chance of their obtaining any. The matter was talked over, and the boys' mother and Cousin Belle were in despair.

"They can eat their shoes," said Willy, reflectively.

The ladies exclaimed in horror.

"That 's what men always do when they get lost in a wilderness where there is no game."

This piece of information from Willy did not impress his hearers as much as he supposed it would.

"I 'll tell you! Let me and Frank go and carry 'em something to eat!"

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“How do you know where they are?”

“They are at our Robbers’ Cave, are n’t they, Cousin Belle? We told the General yesterday how to get there, did n’t we?”

“Yes, and he said last night that he would go there.”

Willy’s idea seemed a good one, and the offer was accepted. The boys were to go out as if to see the troops, and were to take as much food as they thought could pass for their luncheon. Their mother cooked and put up a luncheon large enough to have satisfied the appetites of two young Brobdingnagians, and they set out on their relief expedition.

The two sturdy little figures looked full of importance as they strode off up the road. They carried many loving messages. Their Cousin Belle gave to each separately a long whispered message which each by himself was to deliver to the General. It was thought best not to hazard a note.

They were watched by the ladies from the portico until they disappeared over the hill. They took a path which led into the woods, and walked cautiously for fear some of the raiders might be lurking about. However, the boys saw none of the enemy, and in a little while they

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

came to a point where the pines began. Then they turned into the woods, for the pines were so thick the boys could not be seen, and the pine tags made it so soft under foot that they could walk without making any noise.

They were pushing their way through the bushes, when Frank suddenly stopped.

“Hush!” he said.

Willy halted and listened.

“There they are.”

From a little distance to one side, in the direction of the path they had just left, they heard the trampling of a number of horses’ feet.

“That ’s not our men,” said Willy. “Hugh and the General have n’t any horses.”

“No; that ’s the Yankees,” said Frank. “Let ’s lie down. They may hear us.”

The boys flung themselves upon the ground and almost held their breath until the horses had passed out of hearing.

“Do you reckon they are hunting for us?” asked Willy in an awed whisper.

“No, for Hugh and the General. Come on.”

They rose, went tipping a little deeper into the pines, and again made their way toward the cave.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

"Maybe they 've caught 'em," suggested Willy.

"They can't catch 'em in these pines," replied Frank. "You can't see any distance at all. A horse can't get through, and the General and Hugh could shoot 'em, and then get away before they could catch 'em."

They hurried on.

"Frank, suppose they take us for Yankees?"

Evidently Willy's mind had been busy since Frank's last speech.

"They are n't going to shoot *us*," said Frank; but it was an unpleasant suggestion, for they were not very far from the dense clump of pines between two gullies, which the boys called their cave.

"We can whistle," he said, presently.

"Won't Hugh and the General think we are enemies trying to surround them?" Willy objected. The dilemma was a serious one. "We 'll have to crawl up," said Frank, after a pause.

And this was agreed upon. They were soon on the edge of the deep gully which, on one side, protected the spot from all approach. They scrambled down its steep side and began to creep along, peeping over its other edge from

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

time to time, to see if they could discover the clearing which marked the little green spot on top of the hill, where once had stood an old cabin. The base of the ruined chimney, with its immense fire-place, constituted the boys' "cave." They were close to it, now, and felt themselves to be in imminent danger of a sweeping fusillade. They had just crept up to the top of the ravine and were consulting, when some one immediately behind them, not twenty feet away, called out:

"Hello! What are you boys doing here? Are you trying to capture us?"

They jumped at the unexpected voice. The General broke into a laugh. He had been sitting on the ground on the other side of the declivity, and had been watching their manœuvres for some time.

He brought them to the house-spot where Hugh was asleep on the ground; he had been on watch all the morning, and, during the General's turn, was making up for his lost sleep. He was soon wide awake enough, and he and the General, with appetites bearing witness to their long fast, were without delay engaged in disposing of the provisions which the boys had brought.

The boys were delighted with the mystery of

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

their surroundings. Each in turn took the General aside and held a long interview with him, and gave him all their Cousin Belle's messages. No one had ever treated them with such consideration as the General showed them. The two men asked the boys all about the dispositions of the enemy, but the boys had little to tell.

"They are after us pretty hotly," said the General. "I think they are going away shortly. It's nothing but a raid, and they are moving on. We must get back to camp to-night."

"How are you going?" asked the boys. "You have n't any horses."

"We are going to get some of their horses," said the officer. "They have taken ours—now they must furnish us with others."

It was about time for the boys to start for home. The General took each of them aside, and talked for a long time. He was speaking to Willy, on the edge of the clearing, when there was a crack of a twig in the pines. In a second he had laid the boy on his back in the soft grass and whipped out a pistol. Then, with a low, quick call to Hugh, he sprang swiftly into the pines toward the sound.

"Crawl down into the ravine, boys," called Hugh, following his companion. The boys

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

rolled down over the bank like little ground-hogs; but in a second they heard a familiar drawling voice call out in a subdued tone:

“Hold on, Cunnel! it ’s nobody but me; don’t you know me?” And, in a moment, they heard the General’s astonished and somewhat stern reply:

“Mills, what are you doing here? Who ’s with you? What do you want?”

“Well,” said the new-comer, slowly, “I ’lowed I ’d come to see if I could be o’ any use to you. I heard the Yankees had run you ’way from Oakland last night, and was sort o’ huntin’ for you. Fact is, they ’s been up my way, and I sort o’ ’lowed I ’d come an’ see ef I could help you git back to camp.”

“Where have you been all this time? I wonder you are not ashamed to look me in the face!”

The General’s voice was still stern. He had turned around and walked back to the cleared space.

The deserter scratched his head in perplexity.

“I need n’ ’a’ come,” he said, doggedly. “Where ’s them boys? I don’t want the boys hurted. I seen ’em comin’ here, an’ I jes’ followed ’em to see they did n’t get in no trouble. But—”

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

This speech about the boys effected what the offer of personal service to the General himself had failed to bring about.

“Sit down and let me talk to you,” said the General, throwing himself on the grass.

Mills seated himself cross-legged near the officer, with his gun across his knees, and began to bite a straw which he pulled from a tuft by his side.

The boys had come up out of their retreat, and taken places on each side of the General.

“You all take to grass like young partridges,” said the hunter. The boys were flattered, for they considered any notice from him a compliment.

“What made you fool us, and send us to catch that conscript-guard?” Frank asked.

“Well, you ketched him, did n’t you? You ’re the only ones ever been able to ketch him,” he said, with a low chuckle.

“Now, Mills, you know how things stand,” said the General. “It ’s a shame for you to have been acting this way. You know what people say about you. But if you come back to camp and do your duty, I ’ll have it all straightened out. If you don’t, I ’ll have you shot.”

His voice was as calm and his manner as com-

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

posed as if he were promising the man opposite him a reward for good conduct. He looked Mills steadily in the eyes all the time. The boys felt as if their friend were about to be executed. The General seemed an immeasurable distance above them.

The deserter blinked twice or thrice, slowly bit his shred of straw, looked casually first toward one boy and then toward the other, but without the slightest change of expression in his face.

“Cun’l,” he said, at length, “I ain’t no deserter. I ain’t feared of bein’ shot. Ef I was, I would n’ ’a’ come here now. I ’m gwine wid you, an’ I ’m gwine back to my company; an’ I ’m gwine fight, ef Yankees gits in my way; but ef I gits tired, I ’s comin’ home; an’ tain’t no use to tell you I ain’t, ’cause I *is*,—an’ ef anybody flings up to me that I ’s a-runnin’ away, I ’m gwine to kill ’em!”

He rose to his feet in the intensity of his feeling, and his eyes, usually so dull, were like live coals.

The General looked at him quietly a few seconds, then himself arose and laid his hand on Tim Mills’ shoulder.

“All right,” he said.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

"I got a little snack M'lindy put up," said Mills, pulling a substantial bundle out of his game-bag. "I 'lowed maybe you might be sort o' hongry. Jes' two or three squirrels I shot," he said, apologetically.

"You boys better git 'long home, I reckon," said Mills to Willy. "You ain' 'fraid, is you? 'Cause if you is, I 'll go with you."

His voice had resumed its customary drawl.

"Oh, no," said both boys, eagerly. "We are n't afraid."

"An' tell your ma I ain' let nobody tetch nothin' on the Oakland plantation; not sence that day you all went huntin' deserters; not if I knowed 'bout it."

"Yes, sir."

"An' tell her I 'm gwine take good keer o' Hugh an' the Cunnel. Good-bye!—now run along!"

"All right, sir,—good-bye."

"An' ef you hear anybody say Tim Mills is a d'serter, tell 'em it 's a lie, an' you know it. Good-bye." He turned away as if relieved.

The boys said good-bye to all three, and started in the direction of home.

XVI

AFTER crossing the gully, and walking on through the woods for what they thought a safe distance, they turned into the path.

They were talking very merrily about the General and Hugh and their friend Mills, and were discussing some romantic plan for the recapture of their horses from the enemy, when they came out of the path into the road, and found themselves within twenty yards of a group of Federal soldiers, quietly sitting on their horses, evidently guarding the road.

The sight of the blue-coats made the boys jump. They would have crept back, but it was too late—they caught the eye of the man nearest them. They ceased talking as suddenly as birds in the trees stop chirruping when the hawk sails over; and when one Yankee called to them, in a stern tone, "Halt there!" and started to come toward them, their hearts were in their mouths.

"Where are you boys going?" he asked, as he came up to them.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Going home.”

“Where do you belong?”

“Over there—at Oakland,” pointing in the direction of their home, which seemed suddenly to have moved a thousand miles away.

“Where have you been?” The other soldiers had come up now.

“Been down this way.” The boys’ voices were never so meek before. Each reply was like an apology.

“Been to see your brother?” asked one who had not spoken before—a pleasant-looking fellow. The boys looked at him. They were paralyzed by dread of the approaching question.

“Now, boys, we know where you have been,” said a small fellow, who wore a yellow chevron on his arm. He had a thin moustache and a sharp nose, and rode a wiry, dull sorrel horse. “You may just as well tell us all about it. We know you ’ve been to see ’em, and we are going to make you carry us where they are.”

“No, we ain’t,” said Frank, doggedly.

Willy expressed his determination also.

“If you don’t it ’s going to be pretty bad for you,” said the little corporal. He gave an order to two of the men, who sprang from their horses, and, catching Frank, swung him up behind an-

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

other cavalryman. The boy's face was very pale, but he bit his lip.

"Go ahead,"—continued the corporal to a number of his men, who started down the path. "You four men remain here till we come back," he said to the men on the ground, and to two others on horseback. "Keep him here," jerking his thumb toward Willy, whose face was already burning with emotion.

"I 'm going with Frank," said Willy. "Let me go." This to the man who had hold of him by the arm. "Frank, make him let me go," he shouted, bursting into tears, and turning on his captor with all his little might.

"Willy, he 's not goin' to hurt you,—don't you tell!" called Frank, squirming until he dug his heels so into the horse's flanks that the horse began to kick up.

"Keep quiet, Johnny; he 's not goin' to hurt him," said one of the men, kindly. He had a brown beard and shining white teeth.

They rode slowly down the narrow path, the dragoon holding Frank by the leg. Deep down in the woods, beyond a small branch, the path forked.

"Which way?" asked the corporal, stopping and addressing Frank.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

Frank set his mouth tight and looked him in the eyes.

"Which is it?" the corporal repeated.

"I ain't going to tell," said he, firmly.

"Look here, Johnny; we 've got you, and we are going to make you tell us; so you might just as well do it, easy. If you don't, we 're goin' to make you."

The boy said nothing.

"You men dismount. Stubbs, hold the horses." He himself dismounted, and three others did the same, giving their horses to a fourth.

"Get down!"—this to Frank and the soldier behind whom he was riding. The soldier dismounted, and the boy slipped off after him and faced his captor, who held a strap in one hand.

"Are you goin' to tell us?" he asked.

"No."

"Don't you know?" He came a step nearer, and held the strap forward. There was a long silence. The boy's face paled perceptibly, but took on a look as if the proceedings were indifferent to him.

"If you say you don't know"—said the man, hesitating in face of the boy's resolution.

"Don't you know where they are?"

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Yes, I know; but I ain’t goin’ to tell you,” said Frank, bursting into tears.

“The little Johnny ’s game,” said the soldier who had told him the others were not going to hurt Willy. The corporal said something to this man in an undertone, to which he replied:

“You can try, but it is n’t going to do any good. I don’t half like it, anyway.”

Frank had stopped crying after his first outburst.

“If you don’t tell, we are going to shoot you,” said the little soldier, drawing his pistol.

The boy shut his mouth close, and looked straight at the corporal. The man laid down his pistol, and, seizing Frank, drew his hands behind him, and tied them.

“Get ready, men,” he said, as he drew the boy aside to a small tree, putting him with his back to it.

Frank thought his hour had come. He thought of his mother and Willy, and wondered if the soldiers would shoot Willy, too. His face twitched and grew ghastly white. Then he thought of his father, and of how proud he would be of his son’s bravery when he should hear of it. This gave him strength.

“The knot—hurts my hands,” he said.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

The man leaned over and eased it a little.

"I was n't crying because I was scared," said Frank.

The kind-looking fellow turned away.

"Now, boys, get ready," said the corporal, taking up his pistol.

How large it looked to Frank. He wondered where the bullets would hit him, and if the wounds would bleed, and whether he would be left alone all night out there in the woods, and if his mother would come and kiss him.

"I want to say my prayers," he said, faintly.

The soldier made some reply which he could not hear, and the man with the beard started forward; but just then all grew dark before his eyes.

Next, he thought he must have been shot, for he felt wet about his face, and was lying down. He heard some one say, "He 's coming to;" and another replied, "Thank God!"

He opened his eyes. He was lying beside the little branch with his head in the lap of the big soldier with the beard, and the little corporal was leaning over him throwing water in his face from a cap. The others were standing around.

"What 's the matter?" asked Frank.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“That ’s all right,” said the little corporal, kindly. “We were just a-foolin’ a bit with you, Johnny.”

“We never meant to hurt you,” said the other. “You feel better now?”

“Yes, where ’s Willy?” He was too tired to move.

“He ’s all right. We ’ll take you to him.”

“Am I shot?” asked Frank.

“No! Do you think we ’d have touched a hair of your head—and you such a brave little fellow? We were just trying to scare you a bit and carried it too far, and you got a little faint,—that ’s all.”

The voice was so kindly that Frank was encouraged to sit up.

“Can you walk now?” asked the corporal, helping him and steadying him as he rose to his feet.

“I ’ll take him,” said the big fellow, and before the boy could move, he had stooped, taken Frank in his arms, and was carrying him back toward the place where they had left Willy, while the others followed after with the horses.

“I can walk,” said Frank.

“No, I ’ll carry you, b—bless your heart!”

The boy did not know that the big dragoon

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

was looking down at the light hair resting on his arm, and that while he trod the Virginia wood-path, in fancy he was home in Delaware; or that the pressure the boy felt from his strong arms was a caress given for the sake of another boy far away on the Brandywine. A little while before they came in sight Frank asked to be put down.

The soldier gently set him on his feet, and before he let him go kissed him.

"I 've got a curly-headed fellow at home, just the size of you," he said softly.

Frank saw that his eyes were moist. "I hope you 'll get safe back to him," he said.

"God grant it!" said the soldier.

When they reached the squad at the gate, they found Willy still in much distress on Frank's account; but he wiped his eyes when his brother reappeared, and listened with pride to the soldiers' praise of Frank's "grit," as they called it. When they let the boys go, the little corporal wished Frank to accept a five-dollar gold piece; but he politely declined it.

XVII

THE story of Frank's adventure and courage was the talk of all the Oakland plantation. His mother and Cousin Belle both kissed him and called him their little hero. Willy also received a full share of praise for his courage.

About noon there was great commotion among the troops. They were far more numerous than they had been in the morning, and instead of riding about the woods in small bodies, hunting for the concealed soldiers, they were collecting together and preparing to move.

It was learned that a considerable body of cavalry was passing down the road by Trinity Church, and that the depot had been burnt again the night before. Somehow, a rumor got about that the Confederates were following up the raiders.

In an hour most of the soldiers went away, but a number still stayed on. Their horses were picketed about the yard feeding; and they themselves lounged around, making themselves at

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

home in the house, and pulling to pieces the things that were left. They were not, however, as wanton in their destruction as the first set, who had passed by the year before.

Among those who yet remained were the little corporal, and the big young soldier who had been so kind to Frank. They were in the rear-guard. At length the last man rode off.

The boys had gone in and out among them, without being molested. Now and then some rough fellow would swear at them, but for the most part their intercourse with the boys was friendly. When, therefore, they rode off, the boys were allowed by their mother to go and see the main body.

Peter and Cole were with them. They took the main road and followed along, picking up straps, and cartridges, and all those miscellaneous things dropped by a large body of troops as they pass along.

Cartridges were very valuable, as they furnished the only powder and shot the boys could get for hunting, and their supply was out. These were found in unusual numbers. The boys filled their pockets, and finally filled their sleeves, tying them tightly at the wrist with strings, so that the contents would not spill out. One of the

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

boys found even an old pistol, which was considered a great treasure. He bore it proudly in his belt, and was envied by all the others.

It was quite late in the afternoon when they thought of turning toward home, their pockets and sleeves bagging down with the heavy musket-cartridges. They left the Federal rear-guard feeding their horses at a great white pile of corn which had been thrown out of the corn-house of a neighbor, and was scattered all over the ground.

They crossed a field, descended a hill, and took the main road at its foot, just as a body of cavalry came in sight. A small squad, riding some little distance in advance of the main body, had already passed by. These were Confederates. The first man they saw, at the head of the column by the colonel, was the General, and a little behind him was none other than Hugh on a gray roan; while not far down the column rode their friend Tim Mills, looking rusty and sleepy as usual.

"Goodness! Why here are the General and Hugh! How in the world did you get away?" exclaimed the boys.

They learned that it was a column of cavalry following the line of the raid, and that the Gen-

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

eral and Hugh had met them and volunteered. The soldiers greeted the boys cordially.

"The Yankees are right up there," said the youngsters.

"Where? How many? What are they doing?" asked the General.

"A whole pack of 'em—right up there at the stables, and all about, feeding their horses and sitting all around, and ever so many more have gone along down the road."

"Fling the fence down there!" The boys pitched down the rails in two or three places. An order was passed back, and in an instant a stir of preparation was noticed all down the line of horsemen.

A courier galloped up the road to recall the advance-guard. The head of the column passed through the gap, and, without waiting for the others, dashed up the hill at a gallop—the General and the Colonel a score of yards ahead of any of the others.

"Let 's go and see the fight!" cried the boys; and the whole set started back up the hill as fast as their legs could carry them.

"S'pose they shoot! Won't they shoot us?" asked one of the negro boys, in some apprehension. This, though before unthought of, was a

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

possibility, and for a moment brought them down to a slower pace.

“We can lie flat and peep over the top of the hill.” This was Frank’s happy thought, and the party started ahead again. “Let ’s go around that way.” They made a little detour.

Just before they reached the crest they heard a shot, “bang!” immediately followed by another, “bang!” and in a second more a regular volley began, and was kept up.

They reached the crest of the hill in time to see the Confederates gallop up the slope toward the stables, firing their pistols at the blue-coats, who were forming in the edge of a little wood, over beyond a fence, from the other side of which the smoke of their carbines was rolling. They had evidently started on just as the boys left, and before the Confederates came in sight.

The boys saw their friends dash at this fence, and could distinguish the General and Hugh, who were still in the lead. Their horses took the fence, going over like birds, and others followed, —Tim Mills among them,—while yet more went through a gate a few yards to one side.

“Look at Hugh! Look at Hugh!”

“Look! That horse has fallen down!” cried

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

one of the boys, as a horse went down just at the entrance of the wood, rolling over his rider.

"He 's shot!" exclaimed Frank, for neither horse nor rider attempted to rise.

"See; they are running!"

The little squad of blue-coats were retiring into the woods, with the grays closely pressing them.

"Let 's cut across and see 'em run 'em over the bridge."

"Come on!"

All the little group of spectators, white and black, started as hard as they could go for a path they knew, which led by a short cut through the little piece of woods. Beyond lay a field divided by a stream, a short distance on the other side of which was a large body of woods.

The popping was still going on furiously in the woods, and bullets were "zoo-ing" over the fields. But the boys could not see anything, and they did not think about the flying balls.

They were all excitement at the idea of "our men" whipping the enemy, and they ran with all their might to be in time to see them "chase 'em across the field."

The road on which the skirmish took place, and down which the Federal rear-guard had retreated, made a sharp curve beyond the woods,

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

around the bend of a little stream crossed by a small bridge; and the boys, in taking the short cut, had placed the road between themselves and home; but they did not care about that, for their men were driving the others. They "just wanted to see it."

They reached the edge of the field in time to see that the Yankees were on the other side of the stream. They knew them to be where puffs of smoke came out of the opposite wood. And the Confederates had stopped beyond the bridge, and were halted, in some confusion, in the field.

The firing was very sharp, and bullets were singing in every direction. Then the Confederates got together, and went as hard as they could right at them up to the wood, all along the edge of which the smoke was pouring in continuous puffs and with a rattle of shots. They saw several horses fall as the Confederates galloped on, but the smoke hid most of it. Next they saw a long line of fire appear in the smoke on both sides of the road, where it entered the wood; then the Confederates stopped, and became all mixed up; a number of horses galloped away without their riders, another line of white and red flame came out of the woods, the Confederates began to come back, leaving many

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

horses on the ground, and a body of cavalry in blue coats poured out of the wood in pursuit.

“Look! look! They are running—they are beating our men!” exclaimed the boys. “They have driven ’em back across the bridge!”

“How many of them there are!”

“What shall we do? Suppose they see us!”

“Come on, Mah’srs Frank ’n’ Willy, let ’s go home,” said the colored boys. “They ’ll shoot us.”

The fight was now in the woods which lay between the boys and their home. But just then the gray-coats got together, again turned at the edge of the wood, and dashed back on their pursuers, and—the smoke and bushes on the stream hid everything. In a second more both emerged on the other side of the smoke and went into the woods on the further edge of the field, all in confusion, and leaving on the ground more horses and men than before.

“What ’s them things ‘zip-zippin’ ’round my ears?” asked one of the negro boys.

“Bullets,” said Frank, proud of his knowledge.

“Will they hurt me if they hit me?”

“Of course they will. They ’ll kill you.”

“I ’m gwine home,” said the boy, and off he started at a trot.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Hold on!—We ’re goin’, too; but let ’s go down this way; this is the best way.”

They went along the edge of the field, toward the point in the road where the skirmish had been and where the Confederates had rallied. They stopped to listen to the popping in the woods on the other side, and were just saying how glad they were that “our men had whipped them,” when a soldier came along.

“What in the name of goodness are you boys doing here?” he asked.

“We ’re just looking on an’ lis’ning,” answered the boys meekly.

“Well, you ’d better be getting home as fast as you can. They are too strong for us, and they ’ll be driving us back directly, and some of you may get killed or run over.”

This was dreadful! Such an idea had never occurred to the boys. A panic took possession of them.

“Come on! Let ’s go home!” This was the universal idea, and in a second the whole party were cutting straight for home, utterly stampeded.

They could readily have found shelter and security back over the hill, from the flying balls; but they preferred to get home, and they made straight for it. The popping of the guns, which

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

still kept up in the woods across the little river, now meant to them that the victorious Yankees were driving back their friends. They believed that the bullets which now and then yet whistled over the woods with a long, singing "zoo-ee," were aimed at them. For their lives, then, they ran, expecting to be killed every minute.

The load of cartridges in their pockets, which they had carried for hours, weighed them down. As they ran they threw these out. Then followed those in their sleeves. Frank and the other boys easily got rid of theirs, but Willy had tied the strings around his wrists in such hard knots that he could not possibly untie them. He was falling behind.

Frank heard him call. Without slacking his speed he looked back over his shoulder. Willy's face was red, and his mouth was twitching. He was sobbing a little, and was tearing at the strings with his teeth as he ran. Then the strings came loose one after the other, the cartridges were shaken out over the ground, and Willy's face at once cleared up as he ran forward lightened of his load.

They had passed almost through the narrow skirt of woods where the first attack was made, when they heard some one not far from the side of the road call, "Water!"

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

The boys stopped. "What 's that?" they asked each other in a startled undertone. A groan came from the same direction, and a voice said, "Oh, for some water!"

A short, whispered consultation was held.

"He 's right up on that bank. There 's a road up there."

Frank advanced a little; a man was lying somewhat propped up against a tree. His eyes were closed, and there was a ghastly wound in his head.

"Willy, it 's a Yankee, and he 's shot."

"Is he dead?" asked the others, in awed voices.

"No. Let 's ask him if he is hurt much."

They all approached him. His eyes were shut and his face was ashy white.

"Willy, it 's *my* Yankee!" exclaimed Frank.

The wounded man moved his hand at the sound of the voices.

"Water," he murmured. "Bring me water, for pity's sake!"

"I 'll get you some,—don't you know me? Let me have your canteen," said Frank, stooping and taking hold of the canteen. It was held by its strap; but the boy whipped out a knife and cut it loose.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

The man tried to speak; but the boys could not understand him.

"Where are you goin' get it, Frank?" asked the other boys.

"At the branch down there that runs into the creek."

"The Yankees 'll shoot you down there," objected Peter and Willy.

"I ain' gwine that way," said Cole.

The soldier groaned.

"I 'll go with you, Frank," said Willy, who could not stand the sight of the man's suffering.

"We 'll be back directly."

The two boys darted off, the others following them at a little distance. They reached the open field. The shooting was still going on in the woods on the other side, but they no longer thought of it. They ran down the hill and dashed across the little flat to the branch at the nearest point, washed the blood from the canteen, and filled it with the cool water.

"I wish we had something to wash his face with," sighed Willy, "but I have n't got a handkerchief."

"Neither have I." Willy looked thoughtful. A second more and he had stripped off his light sailor's jacket and dipped it in the water. The

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

next minute the two boys were running up the hill again.

When they reached the spot where the wounded man lay, he had slipped down and was flat on the ground. His feeble voice still called for water, but was much weaker than before. Frank stooped and held the canteen to the man's lips, and he drank. Then Willy and Frank, together, bathed his face with the still dripping cotton jacket. This revived him somewhat; but he did not recognize them and talked incoherently. They propped up his head.

"Frank, it 's getting mighty late, and we 've got to go home," said Willy.

The boy's voice or words reached the ears of the wounded man.

"Take me home," he murmured; "I want some water from the well by the dairy."

"Give him some more water."

Willy lifted the canteen. "Here it is."

The soldier swallowed with difficulty.

He could not raise his hand now. There was a pause. The boys stood around, looking down on him. "I 've come back home," he said. His eyes were closed.

"He 's dreaming," whispered Willy.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“Did you ever see anybody die?” asked Frank, in a low tone.

Willy’s face paled.

“No, Frank; let ’s go home and tell somebody.”

Frank stooped and touched the soldier’s face. He was talking all the time now, though they could not understand everything he said. The boy’s touch seemed to rouse him.

“It ’s bedtime,” he said, presently. “Kneel down and say your prayers for F’ather.”

“Willy, let ’s say our prayers for him,” whispered Frank.

“I can say, ‘Now I lay me.’ ” But before he could begin,

“ ‘Now I lay me down to sleep,’ ” said the soldier tenderly. The boys followed him, thinking he had heard them. They did not know that he was saying—for one whom but that morning he had called “his curly-head at home”—the prayer that is common to Virginia and to Delaware, to North and to South, and which no wars can silence and no victories cause to be forgotten.

The soldier’s voice now was growing almost inaudible. He spoke between long-drawn breaths.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

“ ‘If I should die before I wake.’ ”

“ ‘If I should die before I wake,’ ” they repeated, and continued the prayer.

“ ‘And this I ask for Jesus’ sake,’ ” said the boys, ending. There was a long pause. Frank stroked the pale face softly with his hand.

“ ‘And this I ask for Jesus’ sake,’ ” whispered the lips. Then, very softly, “Kiss me good-night.”

“Kiss him, Frank.”

The boy stooped over and kissed the lips that had kissed him in the morning. Willy kissed him, also. The lips moved in a faint smile.

“God bless—”

The boys waited,—but that was all. The dusk settled down in the woods. The prayer was ended.

“He ’s dead,” said Frank, in deep awe.

“Frank, are n’t you mighty sorry?” asked Willy in a trembling voice. Then he suddenly broke out crying,

“I don’t want him to die! I don’t want him to die!”

XVIII

WHEN the boys reached home it was pitch-dark. They found their mother very anxious about them. They gave an account of the "battle," as they called it, telling all about the charge, in which, by their statement, the General and Hugh did wonderful deeds. Their mother and Cousin Belle sat and listened with tightly folded hands and blanched faces.

Then they told how they found the wounded Yankee soldier on the bank, and about his death. They were startled by seeing their Cousin Belle suddenly fall on her knees and throw herself across their mother's lap in a passion of tears. Their mother put her arms around the young girl, kissed and soothed her.

Early the next morning their mother had an ox-cart (the only vehicle left on the place) sent down to the spot to bring the body of the soldier up to Oakland, so that it might be buried in the grave-yard there. Carpenter William made the coffin, and several men were set to work to dig the grave in the garden.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

It was about the middle of the day when the cart came back. A sheet covered the body. The little cortege was a very solemn one, the steers pulling slowly up the hill and a man walking on each side. Then the body was put into the coffin and reverently carried to the grave. The boys' mother read the burial service out of the prayer-book, and afterward Uncle William Slow offered a prayer. Just as they were about to turn away, the boys' mother began to sing, "Abide with me; fast falls the eventide." She and Cousin Belle and the boys sang the hymn together, and then all walked sadly away, leaving the fresh mound in the garden, where birds peeped curiously from the lilac-bushes at the soldier's grave in the warm light of the afternoon sun.

A small packet of letters and a gold watch and chain, found in the soldier's pocket, were sealed up by the boys' mother and put in her bureau drawer, for they could not then be sent through the lines. There was one letter, however, which they buried with him. It contained two locks of hair, one gray, the other brown and curly.

THE next few months brought no new incidents, but the following year deep gloom fell upon Oakland. It was not only that the times were

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

harder than they had ever been—though the plantation was now utterly destitute; there were no provisions and no crops, for there were no teams. It was not merely that a shadow was settling down on all the land; for the boys did not trouble themselves about these things, though such anxieties were bringing gray hairs to their mother's temples.

The General had been wounded and captured during a cavalry-fight. The boys somehow connected their Cousin Belle with the General's capture, and looked on her with some disfavor. She and the General had quarrelled a short time before, and it was known that she had returned his ring. When, therefore, he was shot through the body and taken by the enemy, the boys could not admit that their cousin had any right to stay upstairs in her own room weeping about it. They felt that it was all her own fault, and they told her so; whereupon she simply burst out crying and ran from the room.

The hard times grew harder. The shadow deepened. Hugh was wounded and captured in a charge at Petersburg, and it was not known whether he was badly hurt or not. Then came the news that Richmond had been evacuated. The boys knew that this was a defeat; but even

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

then they did not believe that the Confederates were beaten. Their mother was deeply affected by the news.

That night at least a dozen of the negroes disappeared. The other servants said the missing ones had gone to Richmond "to get their papers."

A week or so later the boys heard the rumor that General Lee had surrendered at a place called Appomattox. When they came home and told their mother what they had heard, she turned as pale as death, arose, and went into her chamber. The news was corroborated next day. During the following two days, every negro on the plantation left, excepting lame old Sukey Brown. Some of them came and said they had to go to Richmond, that "the word had come" for them. Others, including even Uncle Balla and Lucy Ann, slipped away by night.

After that their mother had to cook, and the boys milked and did the heavier work. The cooking was not much trouble, however, for black-eyed pease were about all they had to eat.

One afternoon, the second day after the news of Lee's surrender, the boys, who had gone to drive up the cows to be milked, saw two horsemen, one behind the other, coming slowly down

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

the road on the far hill. The front horse was white, and, as their father rode a white horse, they ran toward the house to carry the news. Their mother and Cousin Belle, however, having seen the horsemen, were waiting on the porch as the men came through the middle gate and rode across the field.

It was their father and his body-servant, Ralph, who had been with him all through the war. They came slowly up the hill; the horses limping and fagged, the riders dusty and drooping.

It seemed like a funeral. The boys were near the steps, and their mother stood on the portico with her forehead resting against a pillar. No word was spoken. Into the yard they rode at a walk, and up to the porch. Then their father, who had not once looked up, put both hands to his face, slipped from his horse, and walked up the steps, tears running down his cheeks, and took their mother into his arms. It *was* a funeral—the Confederacy was dead.

A little later, their father, who had been in the house, came out on the porch near where Ralph still stood holding the horses.

“Take off the saddles, Ralph, and turn the horses out,” he said.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

Ralph did so.

“Here,—here ’s my last dollar. You have been a faithful servant to me. Put the saddles on the porch.” It was done. “You are free,” he said to the black, and then he walked back into the house.

Ralph stood where he was for some minutes without moving a muscle. His eyes blinked mechanically. Then he looked at the door and at the windows above him. Suddenly he seemed to come to himself. Turning slowly, he walked solemnly out of the yard.

XIX

THE boys' Uncle William came the next day. The two weeks which followed were the hardest the boys had ever known. As yet nothing had been heard of Hugh or the General, though the boys' father went to Richmond to see whether they had been released.

The family lived on corn-bread and black-eyed pease. There was not a mouthful of meat on the plantation. A few aged animals were all that remained on the place.

The boys' mother bought a little sugar and made some cakes, and the boys, day after day, carried them over to the depot and left them with a man there to be sold. Such a thing had never been known before in the history of the family.

A company of Yankees were camped very near, but they did not interfere with the boys. They bought the cakes and paid for them in greenbacks, which were the first new money they had at Oakland. One day the boys were walking along the road, coming back from the camp, when they met a little old one-horse wagon



The Major's Christmas presents.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

driven by a man who lived near the depot. In it were a boy about Willy's size and an old lady with white hair, both in deep mourning. The boy was better dressed than any boy they had ever seen. They were strangers.

The boys touched their limp little hats to the lady, and felt somewhat ashamed of their own patched clothes in the presence of the well-dressed stranger. Frank and Willy passed on. They happened to look back. The wagon stopped just then, and the lady called them:

“Little boys!”

They halted and returned.

“We are looking for my son; and this gentleman tells me that you live about here, and know more of the country than any one else I may meet.”

“Do you know where any graves is?—Yankee graves?” asked the driver, cutting matters short.

“Yes, there are several down on the road by Pigeon Hill, where the battle was, and two or three by the creek down yonder, and there's one in our garden.”

“Where was your son killed, ma'am? Do you know that he was killed?” asked the driver.

“I do not know. We fear that he was; but, of

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

course, we still hope there may have been some mistake. The last seen of him was when General Sheridan went through this country, last year. He was with his company in the rear-guard, and was wounded and left on the field. We hoped he might have been found in one of the prisons; but there is no trace of him, and we fear—”

She broke down and began to cry. “He was my only son,” she sobbed, “my only son—and I gave him up for the Union, and—” She could say no more.

Her distress affected the boys deeply.

“If I could but find his grave. Even that would be better than this agonizing suspense.”

“What was your son’s name?” asked the boys, gently.

She told them.

“Why, that ’s our soldier!” exclaimed both boys.

“Do you know him?” she asked eagerly. “Is—? Is—?” Her voice refused to frame the fearful question.

“Yes, ’m. In our garden,” said the boys, almost inaudibly.

The mother bent her head over on her grandson’s shoulder and wept aloud. Awful as the

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

suspense had been, now that the last hope was removed the shock was terrible. She gave a stifled cry, then wept with uncontrollable grief.

The boys, with pale faces and eyes moist with sympathy, turned away their heads and stood silent. At length she grew calmer.

“Won’t you come home with us? Our father and mother will be so glad to have you,” they said, hospitably.

After questioning them a little further, she decided to go. The boys climbed into the back of the wagon. As they went along, the boys told her all about her son,—his carrying Frank, their finding him wounded near the road, and about his death and burial.

“He was a real brave soldier,” they told her consolingly.

As they approached the house, she asked whether they could give her grandson something to eat.

“Oh, yes, indeed. Certainly,” they answered. Then, thinking perhaps they were raising her hopes too high, they explained apologetically:

“We have n’t got much. We did n’t kill any squirrels this morning. Both our guns are broken and don’t shoot very well, now.”

She was much impressed by the appearance

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

of the place, which looked very beautiful among the trees.

“Oh, yes, they ’re big folks,” said the driver.

She would have waited at the gate when they reached the house, but the boys insisted that they all should come in at once. One of them ran forward and, meeting his mother just coming out to the porch, told who the visitor was.

Their mother instantly came down the steps and walked toward the gate. The women met face to face. There was no introduction. None was needed.

“My son—” faltered the elder lady, her strength giving out.

The boys’ mother put her handkerchief to her eyes.

“I have one, too;—God alone knows where he is,” she sobbed.

Each knew how great was the other’s loss, and in sympathy with another’s grief found consolation for her own.

XX

THE visitors remained at Oakland for several days, as the lady wished to have her son's remains removed to the old homestead in Delaware. She was greatly distressed over the want which she saw at Oakland—for there was literally nothing to eat but black-eyed pease and the boys' chickens. Every incident of the war interested her. She was delighted with their Cousin Belle, and took much interest in her story, which was told by the boys' mother.

Her grandson, Dupont, was a fine, brave, and generous young fellow. He had spent his boyhood near a town, and could neither ride, swim, nor shoot as the Oakland boys did; but he was never afraid to try anything, and the boys took a great liking to him, and he to them.

When the young soldier's body had been removed, the visitors left; not, however, until the boys had made their companion promise to pay them a visit. After the departure of these friends they were much missed.

But the next day there was a great rejoicing at

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

Oakland. Every one was in the dining-room at dinner, and the boys' father had just risen from the table and walked out of the room. A second later they heard an exclamation of astonishment from him, and he called eagerly to his wife, "Come here, quickly!" and ran down the steps. Every one rose and ran out. Hugh and the General were just entering the yard.

They were pale and thin and looked ill; but all the past was forgotten in the greeting.

THE boys soon knew that the General was making his peace with their Cousin Belle, who looked prettier than ever. It required several long walks before all was made right; but there was no disposition toward severity on either side. It was determined that the wedding was to take place very soon. The boys' father suggested, as an objection to an immediate wedding, that since the General was just half his usual size, it would be better to wait until he should regain his former proportions, so that all of him might be married; but the General would not accept the proposition for delay, and Cousin Belle finally consented to be married at once.

The old place was in a great stir over the preparations. A number of the old servants, in-

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

cluding Uncle Balla and Lucy Ann, had one by one come back to their old home. The trunks in the garret were ransacked once more, and enough was found to make up a wedding trousseau of two dresses.

Hugh was to be the General's best man, and the boys were to be the ushers. The only difficulty was that their patched clothes made them feel a little abashed at the prominent rôles they were to assume. However, their mother made them each a nice jacket from a striped dress, one of her only two dresses, and she adorned them with the military brass buttons their father had had taken from his coat; so they felt very proud. Their father, of course, was to give the bride away,—an office he accepted with pleasure, he said, provided he did not have to move too far, which might be hazardous so long as he had to wear his spurs to keep the soles on his boots.

THUS, even amid the ruins, the boys found life joyous, and if they were without everything else, they had life, health, and hope. The old guns were broken, and they had to ride in the ox-cart; but they hoped to have others and to do better, some day.

TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES

The "some day" came sooner than they expected.

The morning before the wedding, word came that there were at the railroad station several boxes for their mother. The ox-cart was sent for them. When the boxes arrived, that evening, there was a letter from their friend in Delaware, congratulating Cousin Belle and apologizing for having sent "a few things" to her Southern friends.

The "few things" consisted not only of necessities, but of everything which good taste could suggest. There was a complete trousseau for Cousin Belle, and clothes for each member of the family. The boys had new suits of fine cloth with shirts and underclothes in plenty.

But the best surprise of all was found when they came to the bottom of the biggest box, and found two long, narrow cases, marked, "For the Oakland boys." These cases held beautiful, new double-barrelled guns of the finest make. There was a large supply of ammunition, and in each case there was a letter from Dupont promising to come and spend his vacation with them, and sending his love and good wishes and thanks to his friends—the "Two Little Confederates."

AMONG THE CAMPS

My acknowledgments are due to Messrs. Harper & Brothers and to Mr. A. B. Storey, the Publishers and the Editor of "Harper's Young People," in which Magazine I had the pleasure of having these stories first appear.—T. N. P.

TO HER:

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

I

HOLLY HILL was the place for Christmas! From Bob down to brown-eyed Evelyn, with her golden hair floating all around her, every one hung up a stocking, and the visit of Santa Claus was the event of the year.

They went to sleep on the night before Christmas—or rather they went to bed, for sleep was long far from their eyes,—with little squeakings and gurglings, like so many little white mice, and if Santa Claus had not always been so very punctual in disappearing up the chimney before daybreak, he must certainly have been caught; for by the time the chickens were crowing in the morning there would be an answering twitter through the house, and with a patter of little feet and subdued laughter small white-clad figures would steal through the dim light of dusky rooms and passages, opening doors with sudden

AMONG THE CAMPS

bursts, and shouting "Christmas gift!" into darkened chambers, at still sleeping elders, then scurrying away in the gray light to rake open the hickory embers and revel in the exploration of their crowded stockings.

Such was Christmas morning at Holly Hill in the old times before the war. Thus it was, that at Christmas, 1863, when there were no new toys to be had for love or money, there were much disappointment and some murmurs at Holly Hill. The children had never really felt the war until then, though their father, Major Stafford, had been off, first with his company and then with his regiment, since April, 1861. Now from Mrs. Stafford down to little tot Evelyn, there was an absence of the merriment which Christmas always brought with it. Their mother had done all she could to collect such presents as were within her reach, but the youngsters were much too sharp not to know that the presents were "just fixed up"; and when they were all gathered around the fire in their mother's chamber, Christmas morning, looking over their presents, their little faces wore an expression of pathetic disappointment.

"I don't think much of *this* Christmas," announced Ran, with characteristic gravity, look-

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

ing down on his presents with an air of contempt. "A hatchet, a ball of string, and a hare-trap is n't much."

Mrs. Stafford smiled, but the smile soon died away into an expression of sadness.

"I too have to do without my Christmas gift," she said. "Your father wrote me that he hoped to spend Christmas with us, and he has not come."

"Never mind; he may come yet," said Bob encouragingly. (Bob always was encouraging. That was why he was "Old Bob.") "An axe was just the thing I wanted, mamma," said he, shouldering his new possession proudly.

Mrs. Stafford's face lit up again.

"And a hatchet was what I wanted," admitted Ran; "now I can make my own hare-traps."

"An' I like a broked knife," asserted Charlie stoutly, falling valiantly into the general movement, whilst Evelyn pushed her long hair out of her eyes, and hugged her baby, declaring:

"I love my dolly, and I love Santa Tlaus, an' I love my papa," at which her mother took the little midget to her bosom, doll and all, and hid her face in her tangled curls.

II

THE holiday was scarcely over when one evening Major Stafford galloped up to the gate, his black horse Ajax splashed with mud to his ear-tips.

The Major soon heard all about the little ones' disappointment at not receiving any new presents.

"Santa Tlaus did n' tum this Trismas, but he 's tummin' next Trismas," said Evelyn, looking wisely up at him, that evening, from the rug where she was vainly trying to make her doll's head stick on her broken shoulders.

"And why did he not come this Christmas, Miss Wisdom?" laughed her father, touching her with the toe of his boot.

"Tause the Yankees would n' let him," said she gravely, holding her doll up and looking at it pensively, her head on one side.

"And why, then, should he come next year?"

"Tause God 's goin' to make him." She turned the mutilated baby around and examined

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

it gravely, with her shining head set on the other side.

“There ’s faith for you,” said Mrs. Stafford, as her husband asked, “How do you know this?”

“Tause God told me,” answered Evelyn, still busy with her inspection.

“He did? What is Santa Claus going to bring you?”

The little mite sprang to her feet. “He ’s goin’ to bring me—a—great—big—dolly—with real sure ’nough hair, and blue eyes that will go to sleep.” Her face was aglow, and she stretched her hands wide apart to give the size.

“She has dreamt it,” said the Major, in an undertone, to her mother. “There is not such a doll as that in the Southern Confederacy,” he continued.

The child caught his meaning. “Yes, he is,” she insisted, “ ’cause I asked him an’ he said he would; and Charlie——”

Just then that youngster himself burst into the room, a small whirlwind in petticoats. As soon as his cyclonic tendencies could be curbed, his father asked him:

“Well, what did you ask Santa Claus for, young man?”

AMONG THE CAMPS

“For a pair of breeches and a sword,” answered the boy, promptly, striking an attitude.

“Well, upon my word!” laughed his father, eyeing the erect little figure and the steady, clear eyes which looked proudly up at him. “I had no idea what a young Achilles we had here. You shall have them.”

The boy nodded gravely. “All right. When I get to be a man I won’t let anybody make my mamma cry.” He advanced a step, with head up, the very picture of spirit.

“Ah! you won’t?” said his father, with a gesture to prevent his wife interrupting.

“Nor my little sister,” said the young warrior, patronizingly, swelling with infantile importance.

“No; he won’t let anybody make *me* ky,” chimed in Evelyn, promptly accepting the proffered protection.

“On my word, Ellen, the fellow has some of the old blood in him,” said Major Stafford, much pleased. “Come here, my young knight.” He drew the boy up to him. “I had rather have heard you say that than have won a brigadier’s wreath. You shall have your breeches and your sword next Christmas. Were I the king I should

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

give you your spurs. Remember, never let any one make your mother or sister cry."

Charlie nodded in token of his acceptance of the condition.

"All right," he said.

III

WHEN Major Stafford galloped away, on his return to his command, the little group at the lawn gate shouted many messages after him. The last thing he heard was Charlie's treble, as he seated himself on the gate post, calling to him not to forget to make Santa Claus bring him a pair of breeches and a sword, and Evelyn's little voice reminding him of her "dolly that can go to sleep."

Many times during the ensuing year, amid the hardships of the campaign, the privations of the march, and the dangers of battle, the Major heard those little voices calling to him. In the autumn he won the three stars of a colonel for gallantry in leading a desperate charge on a town, in a perilous raid into the heart of the enemy's country, and holding the place; but none knew, when he dashed into the town at the head of his regiment under a hail of bullets, that his mind was full of toyshops and clothing stores, and that when he was so stoutly holding his position he was guarding a little boy's suit,

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

a small sword with a gilded scabbard, and a large doll with flowing ringlets and eyes that could "go to sleep." Some of his friends during that year had charged the Major with growing miserly, and rallied him upon hoarding up his pay and carrying large rolls of Confederate money about his person; and when, just before the raid, he invested his entire year's pay in four or five ten-dollar gold pieces, they vowed he was mad.

The Major, however, always met these charges with a smile. And as soon as his position was assured in the captured town he proved his sanity.

The owner of a handsome store on the principal street, over which was a large sign, "Men's and Boy's Clothes," peeping out, saw a Confederate major ride up to the door, which had been hastily fastened when the fight began, and rap on it with the handle of his sword. There was something in the rap that was imperative, and fearing violence if he failed to respond, he hastily opened the door. The officer entered, and quickly selected a little uniform suit of blue cloth with brass buttons.

"What is the price of this?"

"Ten dollars," stammered the shopkeeper.

AMONG THE CAMPS

To his astonishment the Confederate officer put his hand in his pocket and laid a ten-dollar gold piece on the counter.

“Now show me where there is a toyshop.”

There was one only a few doors off, and there the Major selected a child's sword handsomely ornamented, and the most beautiful doll, over whose eyes stole the whitest of roseleaf eyelids, and which could talk and do other wonderful things. He astonished this shopkeeper also by laying down another gold piece. This left him but two or three more of the proceeds of his year's pay, and these he soon handed over a counter to a jeweller, who gave him a small package in exchange.

All during the remainder of the campaign Colonel Stafford carried a package carefully sealed, and strapped on behind his saddle. His care of it and his secrecy about it were the subjects of many jests among his friends in the brigade, and when in an engagement his horse was shot, and the Colonel, under a hot fire, stopped and calmly unbuckled his bundle, and during the rest of the fight carried it in his hand, there was a clamor that he should disclose the contents. Even an offer to sing them a song would not appease them.

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

The brigade officers were gathered around a camp-fire that night on the edge of the bloody field. A Federal officer, Colonel Denby, who had been slightly wounded and captured in the fight, and who now sat somewhat grim and moody before the fire, was their guest.

“Now, Stafford, open the bundle and let us into the secret,” they all said. The Colonel, without a word, rose and brought the parcel up to the fire. Kneeling down, he took out his knife and carefully ripped open the outer cover. Many a jest was leveled at him across the blazing logs as he did so.

One said the Colonel had turned peddler, and was trying to eke out a living by running the blockade on Lilliputian principles; another wagered that he had it full of Confederate bills; a third, that it was a talisman against bullets, and so on. Within the outer covering were several others; but at length the last was reached. As the Colonel ripped carefully, the group gathered around and bent breathlessly over him, the light from the blazing camp-fire shining ruddily on their eager, weather-tanned faces. When the Colonel put in his hand and drew out a toy sword, there was a general exclamation, followed by a dead silence;

AMONG THE CAMPS

but when he took the doll from her soft wrapping, and then unrolled and held up a pair of little trousers not much longer than a man's hand, and just the size for a five-year-old boy, the men turned away their faces from the fire, and more than one, who had boys of his own at home, put his hand up to his eyes.

One of them, a bronzed and weather-beaten officer, who had charged the Colonel with being a miser, stretched himself out on the ground, flat on his face, and sobbed aloud as Colonel Stafford gently told his story of Charlie and Evelyn. Even the grim face of Colonel Denby looked somewhat changed in the light of the fire, and he reached over for the doll and gazed at it steadily for some time.

IV

DURING the whole year the children had been looking forward to the coming of Christmas. Charlie's outbursts of petulance and not rare fits of anger were invariably checked if any mention was made of his father's injunction, and at length he became accustomed to curb himself by the recollection of the charge he had received. If he fell and hurt himself in his constant attempt to climb up impossible places, he would simply rub himself and say, proudly, "I don't cry now, I am a knight, and next Christmas I am going to be a man, 'cause my papa 's goin' to tell Santa Claus to bring me a pair of breeches and a sword." Evelyn could not help crying when she was hurt, for she was only a little girl; but she added to her prayer of "God bless and keep my papa, and bring him safe home," the petition, "Please, God, bless and keep Santa Tlaus, and let him come here Trismas."

Old Bob and Ran, too, as well as the younger ones, looked forward eagerly to Christmas.

AMONG THE CAMPS

But some time before Christmas the steady advance of the Union Armies brought Holly Hill and the Holly Hill children far within the Federal lines, and shut out all chance of their being reached by any message or thing from their father. The only Confederates the children ever saw now were the prisoners who were being passed back on their way to prison. The only news they ever received were the rumors which reached them from Federal sources. Mrs. Stafford's heart was heavy within her, and when, a day or two before Christmas, she heard Charlie and Evelyn, as they sat before the fire, gravely talking to each other of the long-expected presents which their father had promised that Santa Claus should bring them, she could stand it no longer. She took Bob and Ran into her room, and there told them that now it was impossible for their father to come, and that they must help her entertain "the children" and console them for their disappointment. The two boys responded heartily, as true boys always will when thrown on their manliness.

For the next two days Mrs. Stafford and both the boys were busy. Mrs. Stafford, when Charlie was not present, gave her time to cut-

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

ting out and making a little gray uniform suit from an old coat which her husband had worn when he first entered the army; whilst the boys employed themselves, Bob in making a pretty little sword and scabbard out of an old piece of gutter, and Ran, who had a wonderful turn, in carving a doll from a piece of hard seasoned wood.

The day before Christmas they lost a little time in following and pitying a small lot of prisoners who passed along the road by the gate. The boys were always pitying the prisoners and planning means to rescue them, for they had an idea that they suffered a terrible fate. Only one certain case had come to their knowledge. A young man had one day been carried by the Holly Hill gate on his way to the headquarters of the officer in command of that portion of the lines, General Denby. He was in citizen's clothes and was charged with being a spy. The next morning Ran, who had risen early to visit his hare-traps, rushed into his mother's room white-faced and wide-eyed.

"Oh, mamma!" he gasped, "they have hung him, just because he had on those clothes!"

Mrs. Stafford, though she was much moved herself, endeavored to explain to the boy that

AMONG THE CAMPS

this was one of the laws of war ; but Ran's mind was not able to comprehend the principles which imposed so cruel a sentence for what he deemed so harmless a fault.

This act and some other measures of severity gave General Denby a reputation of much harshness among the few old residents who yet remained at their homes in the lines, and the children used to gaze at him furtively as he would ride by, grim and stern, followed by his staff. Yet there were those who said that General Denby's rigor was simply the result of a high standard of duty, and that at bottom he had a soft heart.

V.

THE approach of Christmas was recognized even in the Federal camps, and many a song and ringing laugh were heard around the camp-fires, and in the tents and little cabins used as winter quarters, over the boxes which were pouring in from home. The troops in the camps near General Denby's headquarters on Christmas eve had been larking and frolicking all day like so many children, preparing for the festivities of the evening, when they proposed to have a Christmas tree and other entertainments; and the General, as he sat in the front room of the house used as his headquarters, writing official papers, had more than once during the afternoon frowned at the noise outside which had disturbed him. At length, however, late in the afternoon, he finished his work, and having dismissed his adjutant, he locked the door, and pushing aside all his business papers, took from his pocket a little letter and began to read.

As he read, the stern lines of the grim sol-

AMONG THE CAMPS

dier's face relaxed, and more than once a smile stole into his eyes and stirred the corners of his grizzled moustache.

The letter was scrawled in a large childish hand. It ran:

"My Dearest Grandpapa: I want to see you very much. I send you a Christmas gift. I made it myself. I hope to get a whole lot of dolls and other presents. I love you. I send you all these kisses
. You must kiss them.

"Your loving little granddaughter,

"LILY."

When he had finished reading the letter the old veteran gravely lifted it to his lips and pressed a kiss on each of the little spaces so carefully drawn by the childish hand.

When he had done he took out his handkerchief and blew his nose violently as he walked up and down the room. He even muttered something about the fire smoking. Then he sat down once more at his table, and placing the little letter before him, began to write. As he wrote, the fire smoked more than ever, and the sounds of revelry outside reached him in a perfect uproar; but he no longer frowned, and when the strains of "Dixie" came in at the win-

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

dow, sung in a clear, rich, mellow solo, he sat back in his chair and listened:

“I wish I were in Dixie, away, away;
In Dixie’s land I ’ll take my stand,
To live and die for Dixie land,
Away, away, away down South in Dixie!”

sang the beautiful voice, full and sonorous.

When the song ended, there was an outburst of applause, and shouts apparently demanding some other song, which was refused, for the noise grew to a tumult. The General rose and walked to the window. Suddenly the uproar hushed, for the voice began again, but this time it was a hymn:

“While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.”

Verse after verse was sung, the men pouring out of their tents and huts to listen to the music.

“All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from Heaven to men
Begin and never cease!”

AMONG THE CAMPS

sang the singer to the end. When the strain died away there was a dead silence.

The General finished his letter and sealed it. Carefully folding up the little one which lay before him, he replaced it in his pocket, and going to the door, summoned the orderly who was just without.

"Mail that at once," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"By the way," as the soldier turned to leave, "who was that singing out there just now? I mean that last one who sang 'Dixie,' and the hymn."

"Only a peddler, sir, I believe."

The General's eyes fixed themselves on the soldier.

"Where did he come from?"

"I don't know, sir. Some of the boys had him singing."

"Tell Major Dayle to come here immediately," said the General, frowning.

In a moment the officer summoned entered.

He appeared somewhat embarrassed.

"Who was this peddler?" asked the commander, sternly.

"I—I don't know—" began the other.

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

"You don't know! Where did he come from?"

"From Colonel Watchly's camp directly," said he, relieved to shift a part of the responsibility.

"How was he dressed?"

"In citizen's clothes."

"What did he have?"

"A few toys and trinkets."

"What was his name?"

"I did not hear it."

"And you let him go!" The General stamped his foot.

"Yes, sir; I don't think—" he began.

"No, I know you don't," said the General.
"He was a spy. Where has he gone?"

"I—I don't know. He cannot have gone far."

"Report yourself under arrest," said the commander, sternly.

Walking to the door, he said to the sentinel:

"Call the corporal, and tell him to request Captain Albert to come here immediately."

In a few hours the party sent out reported that they had traced the spy to a place just over the creek, where he was believed to be harbored.

AMONG THE CAMPS

“Take a detail and arrest him, or burn the house,” ordered the General, angrily. “It is a perfect nest of treason,” he said to himself as he walked up and down, as though in justification of his savage order.

“Or wait,” he called to the captain, who was just withdrawing. “I will go there myself, and take it for my headquarters. It is a better place than this. I cannot stand this smoke any longer. That will break up their treasonable work.”

VI

ALL that day the tongues of the little ones at Holly Hill had been chattering unceasingly of the expected visit of Santa Claus that night. Mrs. Stafford had tried to explain to Charlie and Evelyn that it would be impossible for him to bring them their presents this year; but she was met with the undeniable and unanswerable statement that their father had promised them. Before going to bed they had hung their stockings on the mantelpiece right in front of the chimney, so that Santa Claus would be sure to see them.

The mother had broken down over Evelyn's prayer, "not to forget my papa, and not to forget my dolly," and her tears fell silently after the little ones were asleep, as she put the finishing touches to the tiny gray uniform for Charlie. She was thinking not only of the children's disappointment, but of the absence of him on whose promise they had so securely relied. He had been away now for a year, and she had had no word of him for many weeks. Where was he? Was he dead

AMONG THE CAMPS

or alive? Mrs. Stafford sank on her knees by the bedside.

“O God, give me faith like this little child!” she prayed again and again. She was startled by hearing a step on the front portico and a knock at the door. Bob, who was working in front of the hall fire, went to the door. His mother heard him answer doubtfully some question. She opened the door and went out. A stranger with a large bundle or pack stood on the threshold. His hat, which was still on his head, was pulled down over his eyes, and he wore a beard.

“An’ leddy, wad ye bay so koind as to shelter a poor sthranger for a noight at this blissid toim of pace and goodwill?” he said, in a strong Irish brogue.

“Certainly,” said Mrs. Stafford with her eyes fixed on him. She moved slowly up to him. Then, by an instinct, quickly lifting her hand, she pushed his hat back from his eyes. Her husband clasped her in his arms.

“My darling!”

When the pack was opened, such a treasure-house of toys and things was displayed as surely never greeted any other eyes. The smaller children, including Ran, were not awaked, at

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

their father's request, though Mrs. Stafford wished to wake them to see him; but Bob was let into the secrets, except that he was not permitted to see a small package which bore his name. Mrs. Stafford and the Colonel were like two children themselves as they "tipped" about stuffing the long stockings with candy and toys of all kinds. The beautiful doll with flaxen hair, all arrayed in silk and lace, was seated, last of all, securely on top of Evelyn's stocking, with her wardrobe just below her, where she would greet her young mistress when she should first open her eyes, and Charlie's little blue uniform was pinned beside the gray one his mother had made, with his sword buckled around the waist.

Bob was at last dismissed to his room, and the Colonel and Mrs. Stafford settled themselves before the fire, hand in hand, to talk over all the past. They had hardly started, when Bob rushed down the stairs and dashed into their room.

"Papa! papa! the yard 's full of Yankees!"

Both the Colonel and Mrs. Stafford sprang to their feet.

"Through the back door!" cried Mrs. Stafford, seizing her husband.

AMONG THE CAMPS

“He cannot get out that way—they are everywhere. I saw them from my window,” gasped Bob, just as the sound of trampling without became audible.

“Oh! what will you do? Those clothes! If they catch you in those clothes!” began Mrs. Stafford, and then stopped, her face growing ashy pale. Bob also turned even whiter than he had been before. He remembered the young man who was found in citizen’s clothes in the autumn, and knew his dreadful fate. He burst out crying. “Oh, papa! will they hang you?” he sobbed.

“I hope not, my son,” said the Colonel, gravely. “Certainly not, if I can prevent it.” A gleam of amusement stole into his eyes. “It ’s an awkward fix, certainly,” he added.

“You must conceal yourself,” cried Mrs. Stafford, as a number of footsteps sounded on the porch, and a thundering knock shook the door. “Come here.” She pulled him almost by main force into a closet or entry, and locked the door, just as the knocking was renewed. As the door was apparently about to be broken down, she went out into the hall. Her face was deadly white, and her lips were moving in prayer.

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

"Who 's there?" she called, trembling, trying to gain time.

"Open the door immediately, or it will be broken down," replied a stern voice.

She turned the great iron key in the heavy old brass lock, and a dozen men rushed into the hall. They all waited for one, a tall elderly man in a general's fatigue uniform, and with a stern face and a grizzled beard. He addressed her.

"Madam, I have come to take possession of this house as my headquarters."

Mrs. Stafford bowed, unable to speak. She was sensible of a feeling of relief; there was a gleam of hope. If they did not know of her husband's presence— But the next word destroyed it.

"We have not interfered with you up to the present time, but you have been harboring a spy here, and he is here now."

"There is no spy here, and has never been," said Mrs. Stafford, with dignity; "but if there were, you should not know it from me." She spoke with much spirit. "It is not the custom of our people to deliver up those who have sought their protection."

The officer removed his hat. His keen eye

AMONG THE CAMPS

was fixed on her white face. "We shall search the premises," he said sternly, but more respectfully than he had yet spoken. "Major, have the house thoroughly searched."

The men went striding off, opening doors and looking through the rooms. The General took a turn up and down the hall. He walked up to a door.

"That is my chamber," said Mrs. Stafford, quickly.

The officer fell back. "It must be searched," he said.

"My little children are asleep in there," said Mrs. Stafford, her face quite white.

"It must be searched," repeated the General. "Either they must do it, or I. You can take your choice."

Mrs. Stafford made a gesture of assent. He opened the door and stepped across the threshold. There he stopped. His eye took in the scene. Charlie was lying in the little trundle-bed in the corner, calm and peaceful, and by his side was Evelyn, her little face looking like a flower lying in the tangle of golden hair which fell over her pillow. The noise disturbed her slightly, for she smiled suddenly, and muttered

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

something about "Santa Tlaus" and a "dolly." The officer's gaze swept the room, and fell on the overcrowded stockings hanging from the mantel. He advanced to the fireplace and examined the doll and trousers closely. With a curious expression on his face, he turned and walked out of the room, closing the door softly behind him.

"Major," he said to the officer in charge of the searching party, who descended the steps just then, "take the men back to camp, except the sentinels. There is no spy here." In a moment Mrs. Stafford came out of her chamber. The old officer was walking up and down in deep thought. Suddenly he turned to her: "Madam, be so kind as to go and tell Colonel Stafford that General Denby desires him to surrender himself." Mrs. Stafford was struck dumb. She was unable to move or to articulate. "I shall wait for him," said the General, quietly, throwing himself into an arm-chair, and looking steadily into the fire.

VII

AS his father concealed himself, Bob had left the chamber. He was in a perfect agony of mind. He knew that his father could not escape, and if he were found dressed in citizen's clothes he felt that he could have but one fate. All sorts of schemes entered his boy's head to save him. Suddenly he thought of the small group of prisoners he had seen pass by about dark. He would save him! Putting on his hat, he opened the front door and walked out. A sentinel accosted him surlily to know where he was going. Bob invited him in to get warm, and soon had him engaged in conversation.

"What do you do with your prisoners when you catch them?" inquired Bob.

"Send some on to prison—and hang some."

"I mean when you first catch them."

"Oh, they stay in camp. We don't treat 'em bad, without they be spies. There 's a batch at camp now, got in this evening—sort o' Christmas gift." The soldier laughed as he stamped his feet to keep warm.

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

“Where ’s your camp?” Bob asked.

“About a mile from here, right on the road, or rather right on the hill at the edge of the pines ’yond the crick.”

The boy left his companion, and sauntered in and out among the other men in the yard. Presently he moved on to the edge of the lawn beyond them. No one took further notice of him. In a second he had slipped through the gate, and was flying across the field. He knew every foot of ground as well as a hare, for he had been hunting and setting traps over it since he was as big as little Charlie. He had to make a detour at the creek to avoid the picket, and the dense briars were very bad and painful. However, he worked his way through, though his face was severely scratched. Into the creek he plunged. “Outch!” He had stepped into a hole, and the water was as cold as ice. However, he was through, and at the top of the hill he could see the glow of the camp-fires lighting up the sky.

He crept cautiously up, and saw the dark forms of the sentinels pacing backward and forward wrapped in their overcoats, now lit up by the fire, then growing black against its blazing embers, then lit up again, and passing away

AMONG THE CAMPS

into the shadow. How could he ever get by them? His heart began to beat and his teeth to chatter, but he walked boldly up.

"Halt! who goes there?" cried the sentry, bringing his gun down and advancing on him.

Bob kept on, and the sentinel, finding that it was only a boy, looked rather sheepish.

"Don't let him capture you, Jim," called one of them; "Call the Corporal of the Guard," another; "Order up the reserves," a third; and so on. Bob had to undergo something of an examination.

"I know the little Johnny," said one of them.

They made him draw up to the fire, and made quite a fuss over him. Bob had his wits about him and soon learned that a batch of prisoners were at a fire a hundred yards further back. He therefore worked his way over there, although he was advised to stay where he was and get dry, and had many offers of a bunk from his new friends, some of whom followed him over to where the prisoners were.

Most of them were quartered for the night in a hut before which a guard was stationed. One or two, however, sat around the camp-fire, chatting with their guards. Among them was a

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

major in full uniform. Bob singled him out; he was just about his father's size.

He was instantly the center of attraction. Again he told them he was from Holly Hill; again he was recognized by one of the men.

"Run away to join the army?" asked one.

"No," said Bob, his eyes flashing at the suggestion.

"Lost?"

"No."

"Mother whipped you?"

"No."

As soon as their curiosity had somewhat subsided, Bob, who had hardly been able to contain himself, said to the Confederate major in a low undertone:

"My father, Colonel Stafford, is at home, concealed, and the Yankees have taken possession of the house."

"Well?" said the major, looking down at him as if casually.

"He cannot escape, and he has on citizen's clothes, and—" Bob's voice choked suddenly as he gazed at the major's uniform.

"Well?" The prisoner for a second looked sharply down at the boy's earnest face. Then

AMONG THE CAMPS

he put his hand under his chin, and lifting it, looked into his eyes. Bob shivered and a sob escaped him.

The major placed his hand firmly on his knee. "Why, you are wringing wet," he said, aloud. "I wonder you are not frozen to death." He rose and stripped off his coat. "Here, get into this;" and before the boy knew it the major had bundled him into his coat, and rolled up the sleeves so that Bob could use his hands. The action attracted the attention of the rest of the group, and several of the Yankees offered to take the boy and give him dry clothes.

"No, sir," laughed the major; "this boy is a rebel. Do you think he will wear one of your Yankee suits? He 's a little major, and I 'm going to give him a major's uniform."

In a minute he had stripped off his trousers, and was helping Bob into them, standing himself in his underclothes in the icy air. The legs were three times too long for the boy, and the waist came up to his armpits.

"Now go home to your mother," said the major, laughing at his appearance; "and some of you fellows get me some clothes or a blanket. I 'll wear your Yankee uniform out of sheer necessity."

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

Bob trotted around, keeping as far away from the light of the camp-fires as possible. He soon found himself unobserved, and reached the shadow of a line of huts, and keeping well in it, he came to the edge of the camp. He watched his opportunity, and when the sentry's back was turned slipped out into the darkness. In an instant he was flying down the hill. The heavy clothes impeded him, and he stopped only long enough to snatch them off and roll them into a bundle, and sped on his way again. He struck the main road, and was running down the hill as fast as his legs could carry him, when he suddenly found himself almost on a group of dark objects who were standing in the road just in front of him. One of them moved. It was the picket. Bob suddenly stopped. His heart was in his throat.

"Who goes there?" said a stern voice. Bob's heart beat as if it would spring out of his body.

"Come in; we have you," said the man, advancing.

Bob sprang across the ditch beside the road, and putting his hand on the top rail of the fence, flung himself over it, bundle and all, flat on the other side, just as a blaze of light burst from the picket, and the report of a carbine startled

AMONG THE CAMPS

the silent night. The bullet grazed the boy's arm, and crashed through the rail. In a second Bob was on his feet. The picket was almost on him. Seizing his bundle, he dived into the thicket as a half-dozen shots were sent ringing after him, the bullets hissing and whistling over his head. Several men dashed into the woods after him in hot pursuit, and a couple more galloped up the road to intercept him; but Bob's feet were winged, and he slipped through briers and brush like a scared hare. They scratched his face and threw him down, but he was up again. Now and then a shot crashed behind him, but he did not care for that; he thought only of being caught.

A few hundred yards up, he plunged into the stream, and wading across, was soon safe from his pursuers. Breathless, he climbed the hill, made his way through the woods, and emerged into the open fields. Across these he sped like a deer. He had almost given out. What if they should have caught his father, and he should be too late! A sob escaped him at the bare thought, and he broke again into a run, wiping off with his sleeve the tears that would come. The wind cut him like a knife, but he did not mind that.

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

As he neared the house he feared that he might be intercepted again and the clothes taken from him, so he stopped for a moment, and slipped them on once more, rolling up the sleeves and legs as well as he could. He crossed the yard undisturbed. He went around to the same door by which he had come out, for he thought this his best chance. The same sentinel was there, walking up and down, blowing his cold hands. Had his father been arrested? Bob's teeth chattered, but it was with suppressed excitement.

"Pretty cold," said the sentry.

"Ye—es," gasped Bob.

"Your mother 's been out here, looking for you, I guess " said the soldier, with much friendliness.

"I rec—reckon so," panted Bob, moving toward the door. Did that mean that his father was caught? He opened the door, and slipped quietly into the corridor.

General Denby still sat silent before the hall fire. Bob listened at the chamber door. His mother was weeping; his father stood calm and resolute before the fire. He had determined to give himself up.

"If you only did not have on those clothes!"

AMONG THE CAMPS

sobbed Mrs. Stafford. "If I only had not cut up the old uniform for the children!"

"Mother! mother! I have one!" gasped Bob, bursting into the room and tearing off the unknown major's uniform.

VIII

TEN minutes later Colonel Stafford, with a steady step and a proud carriage, and with his hand resting on Bob's shoulder, walked out into the hall. He was dressed in the uniform of a Confederate major, which fitted admirably his tall, erect figure.

"General Denby, I believe," he said, as the Union officer rose and faced him. "We have met before under somewhat different circumstances," he said, with a bow, "for I now find myself your prisoner."

"I have the honor to request your parole," said the General, with great politeness, "and to express the hope that I may be able in some way to return the courtesy which I formerly received at your hands." He extended his hand and Colonel Stafford took it.

"You have my parole," said he.

"I was not aware," said the General, with a bow toward Mrs. Stafford, "until I entered the room where your children were sleeping, that I had the honor of your husband's acquaintance. I will now take my leave and return to camp,

AMONG THE CAMPS

that I may not by my presence interfere with the joy of this season."

"I desire to introduce to you my son," said Colonel Stafford, proudly presenting Bob. "He is a hero."

The General bowed as he shook hands with him. Perhaps he had some suspicion how true a hero he was, for he rested his hand kindly on the boy's head, but he said nothing.

Both Colonel and Mrs. Stafford invited the old soldier to spend the night there, but he declined. He, however, accepted an invitation to dine with them next day.

Before leaving, he requested permission to take one more look at the sleeping children. Over Evelyn he bent silently. Suddenly stooping, he kissed her little pink cheek, and with a scarcely audible "Good-night," passed out of the room and left the house.

The next morning, by light, there was great rejoicing. Charlie and Evelyn were up betimes, and were laughing and chattering over their presents like two little magpies.

"Here 's my sword and here 's my breeches," cried Charlie, "two pair; but I 'm goin' to put on my gray ones. I ain't goin' to wear a blue uniform."

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

“Here ’s my dolly!” screamed Evelyn, in an ecstasy over her beautiful present. And presently Bob and Ran burst in, their eyes fairly dancing.

“Christmas gift! It ’s a real one—real gold!” cried Bob, holding up a small gold watch, whilst Ran was shouting over a silver one of the same size.

That evening, after dinner, General Denby was sitting by the fire in the Holly Hill parlor, with Evelyn nestled in his lap, her dolly clasped close to her bosom, and in the absence of Colonel Stafford, told Mrs. Stafford the story of the opening of the package by the camp-fire. The tears welled up into Mrs. Stafford’s eyes and ran down her cheeks.

Charlie suddenly entered, in all the majesty of his new breeches, and sword buckled on hip. He saw his mother’s tears. His little face flushed. In a second his sword was out, and he struck a hostile attitude.

“You sha’n’t make my mamma cry!” he shouted.

“Charlie! Charlie!” cried Mrs. Stafford, hastening to stop him.

“My papa said I was not to let any one make you cry,” insisted the boy, stepping before his

AMONG THE CAMPS

mother, and still keeping his angry eyes on the General.

“Oh, Charlie!” Mrs. Stafford took hold of him. “I am ashamed of you!—to be so rude!”

“Let him alone, madam,” said the General. “It is not rudeness; it is spirit—the spirit of our race. He has the soldier’s blood, and some day he will be a soldier himself, and a brave one. I shall count on him for the Union,” he said, with a smile.

Mrs. Stafford shook her head.

A few days later, Colonel Stafford, in accordance with an understanding, came over to General Denby’s camp, and reported to be sent on to Washington as a prisoner of war. The General was absent on the lines at the time, but was expected soon, and the Colonel waited for him at his headquarters. There had been many tears shed when his wife bade him good-by.

About an hour after the Colonel arrived, the General and his staff were riding back to camp along the road which ran by the Holly Hill gate. Just before they reached it, two little figures came out of the gate and started down the road. One was a boy of five, who carried a toy sword, drawn, in one hand, whilst with the other he

A CAPTURED SANTA CLAUS

led his companion, a little girl of three, who clasped a large yellow-haired doll to her breast.

The soldiers cantered forward and overtook them.

“Where are you going, my little people?” inquired the General, gazing down at them affectionately.

“I ’m goin’ to get my papa,” said the tiny swordsman firmly, turning a sturdy and determined little face up to him. “My mamma ’s cryin’, an’ I ’m goin’ to take my papa home. I ain’ goin’ to let the Yankees have him.”

The officers all broke into a murmur of mingled admiration and amusement.

“No, we ain’ goin’ let the Yankees have our papa,” chimed in Evelyn, pushing her tangled hair out of her eyes, and keeping fast hold of Charlie’s hand for fear of the horses around her.

The General dismounted.

“How are you going to help, my little Semiramis?” he asked, stooping over her with smiling eyes.

“I ’m goin’ to give my dolly if they will give me my papa,” she said, gravely, as if she understood the equality of the exchange.

AMONG THE CAMPS

“Suppose you give a kiss instead?” There was a second of hesitation, and then she put up her little face, and the old General dropped on one knee in the road and lifted her in his arms, doll and all.

“Gentlemen,” he said to his staff, “you behold the future defenders of the Union.”

The little ones were coaxed home, and that afternoon, as Colonel Stafford was expecting to leave the camp for Washington with a lot of prisoners, a despatch was brought in to General Denby, who read it.

“Colonel,” he said, addressing him, “I think I shall have to continue your parole a few days longer. I have just received information that, by a special cartel which I have arranged, you are to be exchanged for Colonel McDowell as soon as he can reach the lines at this point from Richmond; and meantime, as we have but indifferent accommodations here, I shall have to request you to consider Holly Hill as your place of confinement. Will you be so kind as to convey my respects to Mrs. Stafford, and to your young hero Bob, and make good my word to those two little commissioners of exchange, to whom I feel somewhat committed? I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.”

KITTYKIN, AND THE PART SHE PLAYED IN THE WAR

I

KITTYKIN played a part in the war which has never been recorded. Her name does not appear in the list of any battle; nor is she mentioned in any history as having saved a life, or as having done anything remarkable one way or the other. Yet, in fact, she played a most important part: she prevented a battle which was just going to begin, and brought about a truce between the skirmish lines of the Union and the Confederate troops near her home which lasted several weeks, and probably saved many lives.

There never was a kitten more highly prized than Kittykin, for Evelyn had long wanted a kitten, and the way she found her was so delightfully unexpected.

It was during the war, when everything was very scarce down in the South where Evelyn

AMONG THE CAMPS

lived. "We don't have any coffee, or any kittens, or *anything*," Evelyn said one day to some soldiers who had come to her home from their camp, which was a mile or so away. You would have thought from the way she put them together that kittens, like coffee, were something to have on the table; but she had heard her mamma wishing for coffee at breakfast that morning, and she herself had long been wanting a kitten. Indeed, she used to ask for one in her prayers.

Evelyn had no fancy for anything that, in her own words, "was not live." A thing that had life was of more value in her eyes than all the toys that were ever given her. A young bird which, too fat to fly, had fallen from the nest, or a broken-legged chicken, which was too lame to keep up with its mother, had her tenderest care; a little mouse slipping along the wainscot or playing on the carpet excited her liveliest interest; but a kitten, a "real live kittykin," she had never possessed, though for a long time she had set her heart on having one. One day, however, she was out walking with her mammy in the "big road," when she met several small negro children coming along, and one of them

KITTYKIN

had a little bit of a white kitten squeezed up in his arm. It looked very scared, and every now and then it cried "Mew, mew."

"Oh, mammy, look at that dear little kitty-kin!" cried Evelyn, running up to the children and stroking the little mite tenderly.

"What you children gwine do wid dat little cat?" asked mammy, severely.

"We gwine *loss* it," said the boy who had it, promptly.

"Oh, mammy, don't let them do that! Don't let them hurt it!" pleaded Evelyn, turning to her mammy. "It would get so hungry."

A sudden thought struck her, and she sprang over toward the boy, and took the kitten from him, which instantly curled up in her arms just as close to her as it could get. There was no resisting her appeal, and a minute later she was running home far ahead of her mammy, with the kitten hugged tight in her arms. Her mamma was busy in the sitting-room when Evelyn came rushing in.

"Oh, mamma, see what I have! A dear little kittykin! Can't I have it? They were just going to throw it away, and lose it all by itself;" and she began to jump up and down and rub

AMONG THE CAMPS

the kitten against her little pink cheek, till her mother had to take hold of her to quiet her excitement.

Kittykin (for that was the name she had received) must have misunderstood the action, and have supposed she was going to take her from her young mistress, for she suddenly bunched herself up into a little white ball, and gave such a spit at Evelyn's mamma that the lady jumped back nearly a yard, after which Kittykin quietly curled herself up again in Evelyn's arm. The next thing was to give her some warm milk, which she drank as if she had not had a mouthful all day; and then she was put to sleep in a basket of wool, where Evelyn looked at her a hundred times to see how she was coming on.

Evelyn never doubted after that if she prayed for a thing she would get it; for she had been praying all the time for a "little white kitten," and not only was Kittykin as white as snow, but she was, to use Evelyn's words, "even littler" than she had expected. There could not, to her mind, be stronger proof.

As Kittykin grew a little she developed a temper entirely out of proportion to her size;

KITTYKIN

when she got mad, she got mad all over. If anything offended her she would suddenly back up into a corner, her tail would get about twice as large as usual, and she would spit like a little fury. However, she never fought her little mistress, and even in her worst moments she would allow Evelyn to take her and lay her on her back in the little cradle she had, or carry her by the neck, or the legs, or almost any way except by the tail. To pull her tail was a liberty she never would allow even Evelyn to take. If she was held by the tail her little pink claws flew out as quick as a wink and as sharp as needles. Evelyn was very kind to Kittykin, however, and was careful not to provoke her, for she had been told that getting angry and kicking on the floor, as she herself sometimes did when mammy wanted to comb her curly hair, would make an ugly little girl, and of course it would have the same effect on a kitten.

Fierce, however, as Kittykin was, it soon appeared that she was the greatest little coward in the world. A worm in the walk or a little beetle running across the floor would set her to jumping as if she had a fit, and the first time she ever saw a mouse she was far more afraid

AMONG THE CAMPS

of it than it was of her. If it had been a rat, I am sure that she would have died.

One day Evelyn was sitting on the floor in her mother's chamber sewing a little blue bag, which she said was her work-bag, when a tiny mouse ran, like a little gray shadow, across the hearth. Kittykin was at the moment busily engaged in rolling about a ball of yarn almost as white as herself, and the first thing Evelyn knew she gave a jump like a trap-ball, and slid up the side of the bureau like a little shaft of light, where she stood with all four feet close together, her small back roached up in an arch, her tail all fuzzed up over it, and her mouth wide open and spitting like a little demon. She looked so funny that Evelyn dropped her sewing, and the mouse, frightened half out of its little wits, took advantage of her consternation to make a rush back to its hole under the wainscoting, into which it dived like a little duck. After holding her lofty position for some time, Kittykin let her hairs fall and lowered her back, but every now and then she would raise them again at the bare thought of the awful animal which had so terrified her. At length she decided that she might go down; but how

KITTYKIN

was she to do it? Smooth though the mahogany was, she had, under excitement, gone up like a streak of lightning; but now when she was cool she was afraid to jump down. It was so high that it made her head swim; so, after walking timidly around and peeping over at the floor, she began to cry for some one to take her down, just as Evelyn would have done under the same circumstances.

Evelyn tried to coax her down, but she would not come; so finally she had to drag a chair up to the bureau and get up on it to reach her.

Perhaps it was the fright she experienced when she found herself up so high that caused Kittykin to revenge herself on the little mouse shortly afterward, or perhaps it was only her cat instinct developing; but it was only a short time after this that Kittykin did an act which grieved her little mistress dreadfully. The little mouse had lived under the wainscot since long before Kittykin had come, and it and Evelyn were on very good terms. It would come out and dash along by the wall to the wardrobe, under which it would disappear, and after staying there some time it would hurry back. This Evelyn used to call "paying visits;" and she of-

AMONG THE CAMPS

ten wondered what mice talked about when they got together under the wardrobe. Or sometimes it would slip out and frisk around on the floor—"just playing," as Evelyn said. There was a perfect understanding between them; Evelyn was not to hurt the mouse nor let mammy set a trap for it, and the mouse was not to bite Evelyn's clothes—but if it had to cut at all, was to confine itself to her mamma's. After Kittykin came, however, the mouse appeared to be much less sociable than formerly; and after the occasion when it alarmed Kittykin so, it did not come out again for a long time. Evelyn used to wonder if its mamma was keeping it in.

One day, however, Evelyn was sewing, and Kittykin was lying by, when she suddenly seemed to get tired of doing nothing, and began to walk about.

"Lie down, Kittykin," said her mistress; but Kittykin did not appear to hear. She just lowered her head, and peeped under the bureau, with her eyes set in a curious way. Presently she stooped very low, and slid along the floor without making the slightest noise, every now and then stopping perfectly still. Evelyn watched her closely, for she had never seen her act so before. Suddenly, however, Kittykin

KITTYKIN

gave a spring, and disappeared under the bureau. Evelyn heard a little squeak, and the next minute Kittykin walked out with a little mouse in her mouth, over which she was growling like a little tigress. Evelyn was jumping up to take it away from her when Kittykin, who had gone out into the middle of the room, turned it loose herself, and quietly walking away, lay down as if she were going to sleep. Then Evelyn saw that she did not mean to hurt it, so she sat and watched the mouse, which remained quite still for some time.

After a while it moved a little, to see if Kittykin was really asleep. Kittykin did not stir. Her eyes were fast shut, and the mouse seemed satisfied; so, after waiting a bit, it made a little dash toward the bureau. In a single bound Kittykin was right over it, and had laid her white paw on it. She did not, however, appear to intend it any injury, but began to play with it just as Evelyn would have liked to do; and, lying down, she rolled over and over,, holding it up and tossing it gently, quite as Evelyn sometimes did her, or patting it and admiring it as if it had been the sweetest little mouse in the world. The mouse, too, appeared not to mind it in the least bit; and Evelyn was just thinking

AMONG THE CAMPS

how nice it was that Kittykin and it had become such friends, and was planning nice games with them, when there was a faint little squeak, and she saw Kittykin, who had just been petting the little creature, suddenly drive her sharp white teeth into its neck.

Evelyn rushed at her.

“Oh, you wicked Kittykin! Are n’t you ashamed of yourself?” she cried, catching her up by the tail and shaking her well, as the best way to punish her.

Just then her mamma entered. “Oh, Evelyn, why are you treating kitty so?” she asked.

“Because she ’s so mean,” said Evelyn, severely. “She ’s a murderer.”

Her mamma tried to explain that killing the mouse was Kittykin’s nature; but Evelyn could not see that this made it any the less painful, and she was quite cool to Kittykin for some time.

The little mouse was buried that evening in a matchbox under a rose-bush in the garden; and Kittykin, in a black rag which was tied around her as a dress, was compelled, evidently much against her will, to do penance by acting as chief mourner.

II

KITTYKIN was about five months old when there was a great marching of soldiers backward and forward; the tents in the field beyond the woods were taken down and carried away in wagons, and there was an immense stir. The army was said to be "moving." There were rumors that the enemy was coming, and that there might be a battle near there. Evelyn was so young that she did not understand any more of it than Kittykin did; but her mother appeared so troubled that Evelyn knew it was very bad, and became frightened, though she did not know why. Her mammy soon gave her such a gloomy account, that Evelyn readily agreed with her that it was "like torment." As for Kittykin, if she had been born in a battle, she could not have been more unconcerned. In a day or two it was known that the main body of the army was some little way off on a long ridge, and that the enemy had taken up its position on another hill not far distant, and Evelyn's home was between them; but there was no battle.

AMONG THE CAMPS

Each army began to intrench itself; and in a little while there was a long red bank stretched across the far edge of the great field behind the house, which Evelyn was told was "breast-works" for the picket line, and she pointed them out to Kittykin, who blinked and yawned as if she did not care the least bit if they were.

Next morning a small squadron of cavalry came galloping by. A body of the enemy had been seen, and they were going to learn what it meant. In a little while they came back.

"The enemy," they said, "were advancing, and there would probably be a skirmish right there immediately."

As they rode by, they urged Evelyn's mamma either to leave the house at once or to go down into the basement, where they might be safe from the bullets. Then they galloped on across the field to get the rest of their men, who were in the trenches beyond. Before they reached there a lot of men appeared on the edge of the wood in front of the house. No one could tell how many they were; but the sun gleamed on their arms, and there was evidently a good force. At first they were on horseback; but

KITTYKIN

there was a "Bop! bop!" from the trenches in the field behind the house, and they rode back, and did not come out any more. Next morning, however, they too had dug a trench. These, Evelyn heard some one say, were a picket line. About eleven o'clock they came out into the field, and they seemed to have spread themselves out behind a little rise or knoll in front of the house. Mammy's teeth were just chattering, and she went to moaning and saying her prayers as hard as she could, and Evelyn's mamma told her to take Evelyn down into the basement, and she would bring the baby; so mammy, who had been following mamma about, seized Evelyn, and rushed with her downstairs, where, although they were quite safe, as the windows were only half above the ground, she fell on her face on the floor, praying as if her last hour had come. "Bop! bop!" went some muskets up behind the house. "Bang! bop! bang!" went some on the other side.

Evelyn suddenly remembered Kittykin. "Where was she?" The last time she had seen her was a half-hour before, when she had been lying curled up on the back steps fast asleep in the sun. Suppose she should be there

AMONG THE CAMPS

now, she would certainly be killed, for the back steps ran right out into the yard so as to be just the place for Kittykin to be shot. So thought Evelyn. "Bang! bang!" went the guns again—somewhere. Evelyn dragged a chair up to a window and looked. Her heart almost stopped; for there, out in the yard, quite clear of the houses, was Kittykin, standing some way up the trunk of a tall locust-tree, looking curiously around. Her little white body shone like a small patch of snow against the dark brown bark. Evelyn sprang down from the chair, and forgetting everything, rushed through the entry and out of doors.

"Kitty, kitty, kitty!" she called. "Kittykin, come here! You 'll be killed! Come here, Kittykin!"

Kittykin, however, was in for a game, and as her little mistress, with her golden hair flying in the breeze ran toward her, she rushed scampering still higher up the tree. Evelyn could see that there were some men scattered out in the fields on either side of her, some of them stooping, and some lying down, and as she ran on toward the tree she heard a "Bang! bang!" on each side, and she saw little puffs of white

KITTYKIN

smoke, and something went "Zoo-ee-ee" up in the air; but she did not think about herself, she was so frightened for Kittykin.

"Kitty, kitty! Come down, Kittykin!" she called, running up to the tree and holding up her arms to her. Kittykin might, perhaps, have liked to come down now, but she could no longer do so; she was too high up. She looked down, first over one shoulder, and then over the other, but it was too high to jump. She could not turn around, and her head began to swim. She grew so dizzy, she was afraid she might fall, so she dug her little sharp claws into the bark, and began to cry.

Evelyn would have run back to tell her mamma (who, having sent the baby downstairs to mammy, was still busy upstairs trying to hide some things, and so did not know she was out in the yard); but she was so afraid Kittykin might be killed that she could not let her get out of her sight. Indeed, she was so absorbed in Kittykin that she forgot all about everything else. She even forgot all about the soldiers. But though she did not notice the soldiers, it seemed that some of them had observed her. Just as the leader of the Confederate picket

AMONG THE CAMPS

line was about to give an order to make a dash for the houses in the yard, to his horror he saw a little girl in a white dress and with flying hair suddenly run out into the clear space right between him and the soldiers on the other side, and stop under a tree just in the line of their fire. His heart jumped into his mouth as he sprang to his feet and waved his hands wildly to call attention to the child. Then shouting to his men to stop firing, he walked out in front of the line, and came at a rapid stride down the slope. The others all stood still and almost held their breaths for fear some one would shoot; but no one did. Evelyn was so busy trying to coax Kittykin down that she did not notice anything until she heard some one call out:

“For Heaven’s sake, run into the house, quick!”

She looked around and saw the gentleman hurrying toward her. He appeared to be very much excited.

“What on earth are you doing out here?” he gasped, as he came running up to her.

He was a young man, with just a little light mustache, and with a little gold braid on the sleeves of his gray jacket; and though he

KITTYKIN

seemed very much surprised, he looked very kind.

"I want my Kittykin," said Evelyn, answering him, and looking up the tree, with a little wave of her hand, toward where Kittykin still clung tightly. Somehow she felt at the moment that this gentleman could help her better than any one else.

Kittykin, however, apparently thought differently about it; for she suddenly stopped mew-ing; and as if she felt it unsafe to be so near a stranger, she climbed carefully up until she reached a limb, in the crotch of which she ensconced herself, and peeped curiously over at them with a look of great satisfaction in her face, as much as to say, "Now I 'm safe. I 'd like to see you get me."

The gentleman was stroking Evelyn's hair, and was looking at her very intently, when a voice called to him from the other side:

"Hello, Johnny! what 's the matter?"

Evelyn looked around, and saw another gentleman coming toward them. He was older than the first one, and had on a blue coat, while the first had on a gray one. She knew one was a Confederate and the other was a Yankee, and

AMONG THE CAMPS

for a second she was afraid they might shoot each other, but her first friend called out:

“Her kitten is up the tree. Come ahead!”

He came on, and looked for a second up at Kittykin, but he looked at Evelyn really hard, and suddenly stooped down, and putting his arm around her drew her up to him. She got over her fear in a minute.

“Kittykin ’s up there, and I ’m afraid she ’ll be kilt.” She waved her hand up over her head, where Kittykin was taking occasion to put a few more limbs between herself and the enemy.

“It ’s rather a dangerous place when the boys are out hunting, eh, Johnny?” He laughed as he stood up again.

“Yes, for as big a fellow as you. You would n’t stand the ghost of a show.”

“I guess I ’d feel small enough up there.” And both men laughed.

By this time the men on both sides began to come up, with their guns over their arms.

“Hello! what ’s up?” some of them called out.

“Her kitten ’s up,” said the first two; and, to make good their words, Kittykin not liking so many people below her, shifted her position

KITTYKIN

again, and went up to a fresh limb, from which she again peeped over at them. The men all gathered around Evelyn, and began to talk to her, and both she and Kittykin were surprised to hear them joking and laughing together in the friendliest way.

“What are you doing out here?” they asked; and to all she made the same reply:

“I want my Kittykin.”

Suddenly her mamma came out. She had just gone downstairs, and had learned where Evelyn was. The two officers went up and spoke to her, but the men still crowded around Evelyn.

“She ’ll come down,” said one. “All you have to do is to let her alone.”

“No, she won’t. She can’t come down. It makes her head swim,” said Evelyn.

“That ’s true,” thought Kittykin up in the tree, and to let them understand it she gave a little “Mew.”

“I don’t see how anything can swim when it ’s as dry as it is around here,” said a fellow in gray.

A man in blue handed him his canteen, which he at once accepted, and after surprising Evelyn by smelling it—which she knew was dread-

AMONG THE CAMPS

fully bad manners—turned it up to his lips. She heard the liquid gurgling.

As he handed it back to its owner he said: "Yank, I 'm mighty glad I did n't shoot you. I might have hit that canteen." At which there was a laugh, and the canteen went around until it was empty. Suddenly Kittykin from her high perch gave a faint "Mew," which said, as plainly as words could say it, that she wanted to get down and could not.

Evelyn's big brown eyes filled with tears. "I want my Kittykin," she said, her little lip trembling.

Instantly a dozen men unbuckled their belts, laid their guns on the ground, and pulled off their coats, each one trying to be the first to climb the tree. It was, however, too large for them to reach far enough around to get a good hold on it, so climbing it was found to be far more difficult than it looked to be.

"Why don't you cut it down?" asked some one.

But Evelyn cried out that that would kill Kittykin, so the man who suggested it was called a fool by the others. At last it was proposed that one man should stand against the tree and an-

' KITTYKIN

other should climb up on his shoulders, when he might get his arms far enough around it to work his way up. A stout fellow with a gray jacket on planted himself firmly against the trunk, and one who had taken off a blue jacket climbed up on his shoulders, and might have got up very well if he had not remarked that as the Johnnies had walked over him in the last battle, it was but fair that he should now walk over a Johnny. This joke tickled the man under him so that he slipped away and let him down. At length, however, three or four men got good "holds," and went slowly up one after the other amid such encouraging shouts from their friends on the ground below as: "Go it, Yank, the Johnny 's almost got you!" "Look out, Johnny, the Yanks are right behind you!" etc., whilst Kittykin gazed down in astonishment from above, and Evelyn looked up breathless from below. With much pulling and kicking, four men finally got up to the lowest limb, after which the climbing was comparatively easy. A new difficulty, however, presented itself. Kittykin suddenly took alarm, and retreated still higher up among the branches.

The higher they climbed after that, the higher

AMONG THE CAMPS

she climbed, until she was away up on one of the topmost boughs, which was far too slender for any one to follow her. There she turned and looked back with alternate alarm and satisfaction expressed in her countenance. If the men stirred, she stood ready to fly; if they kept still, she settled down and mewed plaintively. Once or twice as they moved she took fright and looked almost as if about to jump.

Evelyn was breathless with excitement. "Don't let her jump," she called, "she will get kilt!"

The men, too, were anxious to prevent that. They called to her, held out their hands, and coaxed her in every tone by which a kitten is supposed to be influenced. But it was all in vain. No cajoleries, no promises, no threats, were of the least avail. Kittykin was there safe, out of their reach, and there she would remain, sixty feet above the ground. Suddenly she saw that something was occurring below. She saw the men all gather around her little mistress, and could hear her at first refuse to let something be done, and then consent. She could not make out what it was, though she strained her ears. She remembered to have heard mammy

KITTYKIN

tell her little mistress once that "curiosity had killed a cat," and she was afraid to think too much about it so high up in the tree. Still when she heard an order given, "Go back and get your blankets," and saw a whole lot of the men go running off into the field on either side, and presently come back with their arms full of blankets, she could not help wondering what they were going to do. They at once began to unroll the blankets and hold them open all around the tree, until a large circle of the ground was quite hidden.

"Ah!" said Kittykin, "it 's a wicked trap!" and she dug her little claws deep into the bark, and made up her mind that nothing should induce her to jump. Presently she heard the soldiers in the tree under her call to those on the ground:

"Are you ready?"

And they said, "All right!"

"Ah!" said Kittykin, "they cannot get down, either. Serves them right!"

But suddenly they all waved their arms at her and cried, "Scat!"

Goodness! The idea of crying "scat" at a kitten when she is up in a tree!—"scat," which

AMONG THE CAMPS

fills a kitten's breast with terror! It was brutal, and then it was all so unexpected. It came very near making her fall. As it was, it set her heart to thumping and bumping against her ribs, like a marble in a box. "Ah!" she thought, "if those brutes below were but mice, and I had them on the carpet!" So she dug her claws into the bark, which was quite tender up there, and it was well she did, for she heard some one call something below that sounded like "Shake!" and before she knew it the man nearest her reached up, and, seizing the limb on which she was, screwed up his face, and— Goodness! it nearly shook the teeth out of her mouth and the eyes out of her head.

Shake! shake! shake! it came again each time nearly tearing her little claws out of their sockets and scaring her to death. She saw the ground swim far below her, and felt that she would be mashed to death. Shake! shake! shake! shake! She could not hold out much longer, and she spat down at them. How those brutes below laughed! She formed a desperate resolve. She would get even with them. "Ah, if they were but—" Shake! sha— With a fierce spit, partly of rage, partly of fear, Kitty-kin let go, whirled suddenly, and flung herself

KITTYKIN

on the upturned face of the man next beneath her, from him to the man below him, and finally, digging her little claws deep in his flesh, sprang with a wild leap clear of the boughs, and shot whizzing out into the air, whilst the two men, thrown off their guard by the suddenness of the attack, loosed their hold, and went crashing down into the forks upon those below.

The first thing Evelyn and the men on the ground knew was the crash of the falling men and the sight of Kittykin coming whizzing down, her little claws clutching wildly at the air. Before they could see what she was, she gave a bounce like a trap-ball as high as a man's head, and then, as she touched the ground again, shot like a wild sky-rocket hissing across the yard, and, with her tail all crooked to one side and as big as her body, vanished under the house. Oh, such a shout as there was from the soldiers! Evelyn heard them yelling as she ran off after Kittykin to see if she was n't dead. They fairly howled with delight as the men in the tree, with scratched faces and torn clothes, came crawling down. They looked very sheepish as they landed among their comrades; but the question whether Kittykin had landed in a blanket or had hit the solid ground fifty feet out

AMONG THE CAMPS

somewhat relieved them. They all agreed that she had bounced twenty feet.

Why Kittykin was not killed outright was a marvel. One of her eyes was a little bunged up, the claws on three of her feet were loosened, and for a week she felt as if she had been run through a sausage mill; but she never lost any of her speed. Ever afterward when she saw a soldier she would run for life, and hide as far back under the house as she could get, with her eyes shining like two little live coals.

For some time, indeed, she lived in perpetual terror, for the soldiers of both lines used to come up to the house, as the friendship they formed that day never was changed, and though they remained on the two opposite hills for quite a while, they never fired a shot at each other. They used instead to meet and exchange tobacco and coffee, and laugh over the way Kittykin routed their joint forces in the tree the day of the skirmish.

As for Kittykin, she never put on any airs about it. She did not care for that sort of glory. She never afterward could tolerate a tree; the earth was good enough for her; and the highest she ever climbed was up in her little mistress's lap.

“NANCY PANSY.”

I

“NANCY PANSY” was what Middleburgh called her, though the parish register of baptism contained nothing nearer the name than that of one Anne, daughter of Baylor Seddon, Esq., and Ellenor, his wife. Whatever the register may have thought about it, “Nancy Pansy” was what Middleburgh called her, and she looked so much like a cherub, with her great eyes laughing up at you and her tangles blowing all about her dimpling pink face, that Dr. Spotswood Hunter, or “the Old Doctor,” as he was known to Middleburgh, used to vow she had gotten out of Paradise by mistake that Christmas Eve.

Nancy Pansy was the idol of the old doctor, as the old doctor was the idol of Middleburgh. He had given her a doll baby on the day she was born, and he always brought her one on her birthday, though, of course, the first three or

AMONG THE CAMPS

four which he gave her were of rubber, because as long as she was a little girl she used to chew her doll after a most cannibal-like fashion, she and Harry's puppies taking turn and turn about at chewing in the most impartial and friendly way. Harry was the old doctor's son. As she grew a little older, however, the doctor brought her better dolls; but the puppies got older faster than Nancy Pansy, and kept on chewing up her dolls, so they did not last very long, which, perhaps, was why she never had a "real live doll," as she called it.

Some people said the reason the old doctor was so fond of Nancy Pansy was because he had been a lover of her beautiful aunt, whose picture as "Charity giving Bread to the Poor Woman and her Children" was in the stained-glass window in the church, with the Advent angel in the panel below, to show that she had died at Christmas-tide and was an angel herself now; some said it was because he had had a little daughter himself who had died when a wee bit of a girl, and Nancy Pansy reminded him of her; some said it was because his youngest born, his boy Harry, with the light hair, who now commanded a company in the Army of

“NANCY PANSY”

Northern Virginia, was so fond of Nancy Pansy's lovely sister Ellen; some said it was because the old doctor was fond of all children; but the old doctor said it was “because Nancy Pansy was Nancy Pansy,” and looked like an angel, and had more sense than anybody in Middleburgh, except his old sorrel horse Slouch, who, he always maintained, had sense enough to have prevented the war if he had been consulted.

Whatever was the cause, Nancy Pansy was the old doctor's boon companion; and wherever the old doctor was, whether in his old rattling brown buggy, with Slouch jogging sleepily along the dusty roads which Middleburgh called her “streets,” or sitting in the shadiest corner of his porch, Nancy Pansy was in her waking hours generally beside him, her great pansy-colored eyes and her sunny hair making a bright contrast to the white locks and tanned cheeks of the old man. His home was just across the fence from the big house in which Nancy Pansy lived, and there was a hole where two palings were pulled off, through which Nancy Pansy used to slip when she went back and forth, and through which her little black

AMONG THE CAMPS

companion, whose name, according to Nancy Pansy's dictionary, was "Marphy," just could squeeze. Sometimes, indeed, Nancy Pansy used to fall asleep over at the old doctor's on the warm summer afternoons, and wake up next morning, curiously enough, to find herself in a strange room, in a great big bed, with a railing around the top of the high bedposts, and curtains hanging from it, and with Marphy asleep on a pallet near by.

"That child is your shadow, doctor," said Nancy Pansy's mother one day to him.

"No, madam; she is my sunshine," answered the old man, gravely.

Nancy Pansy's mother smiled, for when the old doctor said a thing he meant it. All Middleburgh knew that, from old Slouch, who never would open his eyes for any one else, and old Mrs. Hippin, who never would admit she was better to any one else, up to Nancy Pansy herself. Perhaps this was the reason why when the war broke out, and all the other men went into the army, the old doctor, who was too old and feeble to go himself, but had sent his only son Harry, was chosen by tacit consent as Middleburgh's general adviser and guardian. Thus it was he who had to advise Mrs. Latimer the

“NANCY PANSY”

druggist's wife, how to keep the little apothecary's shop at the corner of the Court-house Square after her husband went into the army; and it was he who advised Mrs. Seddon to keep the post-office in the little building at the bottom of her lawn, which had served as her husband's law office before he went off to the war at the head of the Middleburgh Artillery. He even gave valuable assistance as well as advice to Mrs. Hippin about curing her chickens of the gapes; and to Nancy Pansy's great astonishment had several times performed a most remarkable operation by inserting a hair from old Slouch's mane down the invalid's little stretched throat.

He used to go around the town nearly every afternoon, seeing the healthy as well as the sick, and giving advice as well as physic, both being taken with equal confidence. It was what he called “reviewing his out-posts” and he used to explain to Nancy Pansy that that was the way her father and his Harry did in their camp. Nancy Pansy did not wholly understand him, but she knew it was something that was just right; so she nodded gravely, and said, “Umh-hmh!”

It was not hard to get a doll the first year

AMONG THE CAMPS

of the war, but before the second year was half over there was not one left in Middleburgh. The old doctor explained to Nancy Pansy that they had all gone away to the war. She did not quite understand what dollies had to do with fighting, but she knew that war made the dolls disappear. Still she kept on talking about the new doll she would get on her birthday at Christmas, and as the old doctor used to talk to her about it, and discuss the sort of hair it should have, and the kind of dress it should wear, she never doubted that she should get it in her stocking as usual on Christmas morning.

II

THE old doctor's boots were very bad—those old boots which Middleburgh knew as well as they knew Nancy Pansy's eyes or the church steeple. Mrs. Seddon had taken the trouble to scold him one day in the autumn when she heard him coughing, and she had sent him a small roll of money "on account," she wrote him, "of a long bill," to get a pair of new boots. The old doctor never sent in a bill; he would as soon have sent a small-pox patient into Nancy Pansy's play-room. He calmly returned the money, saying he never transacted business with women who had husbands, and that he always dressed to suit himself, at which Mrs. Seddon laughed; for, like the rest of Middleburgh, she knew that those old boots never stood back for any weather, however bad. She arranged, however, to have a little money sent to him through the post-office from another town without any name to the letter enclosing it. But the old boots were still worn, and Nancy Pansy, at her mother's suggestion, learned to

AMONG THE CAMPS

knit, that she might have a pair of yarn socks knit for the old doctor at Christmas. She intended to have kept this a secret, and she did keep it from every one but the old doctor; she did not quite *tell* even him, but she could not help making him "guess" about it. Christmas Eve she went over to the old doctor's, and whilst she made him shut his eyes, hung up his stocking herself, into which she poked a new pair of very queer-shaped yarn socks, a little black in some places from her little hands, for they were just done, and there had not been time to wash them. She consulted the old doctor to know if he really—really, "now, really"—thought Santa Claus would bring her a doll "through the war"; but she could only get a "perhaps" out of him, for he said he had not heard from Harry.

It was about ten o'clock that night when the old doctor came home from his round of visits, and opening his old secretary, took out a long thin bundle wrapped in paper, and slipping it into his pocket, went out again into the snow which was falling. Old Limpid, the doctor's man, had taken Slouch to the stable, so the old doctor walked, stumbling around through the dark by the gate, thinking with a sigh of his boy

“NANCY PANSY”

Harry, who would just have vaulted over the palings, and who was that night sleeping in the snow somewhere. However, he smiled when he put the bundle into Nancy Pansy's long stocking, and he smiled again when he put his old worn boots to the fire and warmed his feet. But when Nancy Pansy slipped next morning through her “little doctor's-gate,” as she called her hole in the fence, and burst into his room before he was out of bed, to show him with dancing eyes what Santa Claus had brought her, and announced that she had “named her ‘Harry,’ all herself,” the old doctor had to wipe his eyes before he could really see her.

Harry was the first “real doll” Nancy Pansy had ever had—that was what she said—and Harry soon became as well known in Middleburgh as Nancy Pansy herself. She used to accompany Nancy Pansy and the old doctor on their rounds, and instead of the latter two being called “the twins,” they and Harry were now dubbed “the triplets.” It was astonishing what an influence Harry came to have on Nancy Pansy's life. She carried her everywhere, and the doll would frequently be seen sitting up in the old doctor's buggy alone, whilst Slouch dozed in the sun outside of some

AMONG THE CAMPS

patient's door. Of course, so much work as Harry had to do had the effect of marring her freshness a good deal, and she met with one or two severe accidents, such as breaking her leg, and cracking her neck; but the old doctor attended her in the gravest way, and performed such successful operations that really she was, except as to looks, almost as good as new; besides, as Nancy Pansy explained, dolls had to have measles and "theseases" just like other folks.

III

IN March, 186—, Middleburgh “fell.” That is, it fell into the hands of the Union army, and remained in their hands afterwards. It was terrible at first, and Nancy Pansy stuffed Harry into a box, and hid her away.

It was awfully lonesome, however, and to think of the way Harry was doubled up and cramped down in that box under the floor was dreadful. So at last, finding that whatever else they did, the soldiers did not trouble her, she took Harry out. But she never could go about with her as before, for of course things were different, and although she got over her fright at the soldiers, as did her sister Ellen and the rest of Middleburgh, they never were friendly. Indeed, sometimes they were just the reverse, and at last they got to such a pitch that the regiment which was there was taken away, and a new regiment, or rather two new companies, were sent there. These were Companies A and C of the —th Regiment of — Veterans. They had been originally known as “Volunteers,” but

AMONG THE CAMPS

now they were known as "Veterans," because they had been in so many battles.

The —th were perhaps the youngest men in that department, being mainly young college fellows who had enlisted all together. Some of the regiments composed of older men were at first inclined to laugh at the smooth-faced youngsters who could hardly raise a mustache to a mess; but when these same rosy-cheeked fellows flung off their knapsack in battle after battle, and went rushing ahead under a hail of bullets and shell, they changed their tune and dubbed them "The Baby Veterans." Thus, in 186—, the Baby Veterans went to Middleburgh for a double purpose:—first, that they might recruit and rest; and, secondly, because for the past six months Middleburgh had been causing much worry, and was regarded as a nest of treason and trouble. The regiment which had been there before was a new regiment, not long since recruited, and had been in a continual quarrel with Middleburgh, and as Middleburgh consisted mainly of women and children and a few old men, there was not much honor to be got out of rows with them. Middleburgh complained that the soldiers were tyrannical and caused the trouble; the soldiers in-

“NANCY PANSY”

sisted that Middleburgh was constantly breaking the regulations, and conducted itself in a high-handed and rebellious way, and treated them with open scorn. As an evidence, it was cited that the women in Middleburgh would not speak to the Union soldiers. And it was rumored that the girls there were uncommonly pretty. When the Baby Veterans heard this, they simply laughed, pulled their budding mustaches, and announced that they would “keep things straight in Middleburgh.”

Tom Adams was first lieutenant of Company C. He had enlisted as a private, and had been rapidly promoted to corporal, sergeant, and then lieutenant; and he was in a fair way to be captain soon, as the captain of his company was at home badly wounded, and if he should be permanently disabled, Tom was certain of the captaincy. If any man could bring Middleburgh to terms, Tom Adams was the man, so his friends declared, and they would like to see any woman who would refuse to speak to Tom Adams—they really would.

The Baby Veterans reached Middleburgh in the night, and took up their quarters on the Court-house Square, vacated by the regiment which had just left. When morning came they

AMONG THE CAMPS

took a look at Middleburgh, and determined to intimidate it on the spot. They drilled, marched and counter-marched up and down the dusty streets, and around the old whitewashed courthouse, to show that they meant business, and did not propose to stand any foolishness—not they.

Nancy Pansy and her sister Ellen had been with Harry to see old Mrs. Hippin, who was sick, to carry her some bread and butter, and were returning home about mid-day. They had not seen the new soldiers, and were hurrying along, hoping they might not see them, when they suddenly heard the drums and fifes playing, and turning the corner, they saw the soldiers between them and their gate, marching up the road toward them. A tall young officer was at their head; his coat was buttoned up very tight, and he carried his drawn sword with the handle in his right hand and the tip in his left, and carried his head very high. It was Tom Adams. Nancy Pansy caught tight hold of her sister's hand, and clasped Harry closely to her bosom. For a second they stopped, then, as there was no help for it, they started forward across the road, just in front of the soldiers. They were so close that Nancy Pansy

“NANCY PANSY”

was afraid they would march over them, and she would have liked to run. She clutched sister's hand hard; but her sister did not quicken her pace at all, and the young officer had to give the order, “Mark time—march!” to let them pass. He looked very grand as he drew himself up, but Nancy Pansy's sister held her hand firmly, and took not the slightest notice of him. Lifting her head defiantly in the air, and keeping her dark eyes straight before her, she passed with Nancy Pansy within two steps of the young lieutenant and his drawn sword, neither quickening nor slowing her pace a particle. They might have seemed not to know that a Federal soldier was within a hundred miles of them but for the way that Nancy Pansy squeezed Harry, and the scornful air which sat on her sister's stern little face and erect figure as she drew Nancy Pansy closer to her, and gathered up her skirts daintily in her small hand, as though they might be soiled by an accidental touch.

Tom Adams had a mind to give the order “Forward!” and make them run out of the way, but he did not do it, so he marched back to camp, and told the story to his mess, walking around the table, holding the table-cloth in his

AMONG THE CAMPS

hand, to show how the little rebel had done. He vowed he would get even with her.

As the days went on, the Baby Veterans and Middleburgh came no nearer being acquainted than they were that morning. The Baby Veterans still drilled, and paraded, and set pickets all around the town; Middleburgh and Nancy Pansy still picked up their skirts and passed by with uplifted heads and defiant eyes. The Baby Veterans shouted on the Court-house Square, "Yankee Doodle" and the "Star-spangled Banner"; Middleburgh sang on its verandas and in its parlors, "Dixie" and the "Bonnie Blue Flag." Perhaps, some evenings Middleburgh may have stopped its own singing, and have stolen out on its balconies to listen to the rich chorus which came up from the Court-house Grove, but if so, the Baby Veterans never knew it; or, perhaps, the Baby Veterans some evenings may have strolled along the shadowed streets, or stretched themselves out on the grass to listen to the sweet voices which floated down from the embowered verandas in the Judge's yard; if so, Middleburgh never guessed it.

Nancy Pansy used to sing sweetly, and she would often sing whilst her sister played for her.

“NANCY PANSY”

The strict regulations established by the soldiers prevented any letters from going or coming unopened, and Middleburgh never would tolerate that. So the only mail which passed through the office was that which the Baby Veterans received or sent. As stated, Nancy Pansy's mother, by the old doctor's advice and for reasons good to her and her friends, still kept the post-office, under a sort of surveillance, yet the intercourse with the soldiers was strictly official; the letters were received or were delivered by the post-mistress in silence, or if the Baby Veterans asked a question it was generally replied to by a haughty bow, or an ungracious “No.”

One mail day Mrs. Seddon was ill, so Nancy Pansy's sister Ellen had to go to open the mail, and Nancy Pansy went with her, taking Harry along, “to take care of them.”

It happened that Tom Adams and a friend came in to ask for their letters. Nancy Pansy's sister was standing at the table arranging the mail, and Nancy Pansy was sitting up on the table by her, holding the battered but cherished Harry in her lap. The young officer stiffened up as he saw who was before him.

“Are there any letters for Lieutenant

AMONG THE CAMPS

Adams?" he asked, in a very formal and stately manner.

There was no reply or motion to show that he had been heard, except that Nancy Pansy's sister began to go over the letters again from the beginning of the A's. Suddenly Nancy Pansy, who was watching her, saw one, and exclaiming, "Oh! there 's one!" seized it, and slipped down from the table to give it to its owner, proud to show that she could read writing. Before she had reached the window, however, her sister caught her quickly, and taking the letter from her, slowly advanced and handed it to the young soldier; then turning quietly away, she took out her handkerchief and wiped her hand very hard where it had touched the letter, as if it had been soiled. The young officer strode out of the door with a red face and an angry step, and that evening the story of the way the little rebel wiped her hands after touching Tom Adams's letter was all over camp.

IV

AFTER this it was pretty well understood that the Baby Veterans and Middleburgh were at war. The regulations were more strictly enforced than ever before, and for a while it looked as if it was going to be as bad as it was when the other regiment was there. Old Limpid, the old doctor's man, was caught one night with some letters on his person, several of them addressed to "Captain Harry Hunter, Army of Northern Virginia," etc., and was somewhat severely dealt with, though, perhaps fortunately for him and his master, the letters, one of which was in a feminine hand, whilst abusive of the soldiers, did not contain any information which justified very severe measures, and after a warning he was set free again.

Nancy Pansy's sister Ellen was enraged next day to receive again her letter from a corporal's guard, indorsed with an official stamp, "Returned by order," etc. She actually cried about it.

AMONG THE CAMPS

Nancy Pansy had written a letter to Harry, too—not her own Harry, but the old doctor's—and hers came back also; but she did not cry about it, for she had forgotton to tell Harry that she had a kitten.

Still it was very bad; for after that even the old doctor was once more subjected to the strict regulations which had existed before the Baby Veterans came, and he could no longer drive in and out at will, as he and Nancy Pansy had been doing since the regiment arrived.

It was not, however, long after this that Nancy Pansy had quite an adventure. She and Harry had been with the old doctor, and the old doctor had to go and see some children with the measles, so, as Harry had never had measles, he sent her and Nancy Pansy back; but Nancy Pansy had found an old cigar-box, which was a treasure, and would have made a splendid cradle for Harry, except that it was so short that when Harry's legs were put into it, her head and shoulders stuck up, and when her body was in it, her legs hung out. Still, if it would not do for a cradle, she had got a piece of string, and it would do for a carriage. So she was coming home very cheerfully, thinking

“NANCY PANSY”

of the way Harry would enjoy her ride down the walk.

It was just at this time that Tom Adams, feeling thoroughly bored with his surroundings, left camp and sauntered up the street alone, planning how he could get his company ordered once more to the front. He could not stand this life any longer. As he strolled along the walk the sound of the cheerful voices of girls behind the magnolias and rose bowers came to him, and a wave of homesickness swept over him as he thought of his sisters and little nieces away up North.

Suddenly, as he turned a corner, he saw a small figure walking slowly along before him; the great straw hat on the back of her head almost concealed the little body, but her sunny hair was peeping down below the broad brim, and Adams knew the child.

She carried under her arm an old cigar-box, out of one end of which peeped the head and shoulders of an old doll, the feet of which stuck out of the other end. A string hung from the box, and trailed behind her on the pathway. She appeared to be very busy about something, and to be perfectly happy, for as she walked

AMONG THE CAMPS

along she was singing out of her content a wordless little song of her heart, "Tra-la-la, tra-la-la."

The young officer fell into the same gait with the child, and instinctively trod softly to keep from disturbing her. Just then, however, a burly fellow named Griff O'Meara, who had belonged to one of the companies which preceded them, and had been transferred to Adams's company, came down a side street, and turned into the walkway just behind the little maid. He seemed to be tipsy. The trailing string caught his eye, and he tipped forward and tried to step on it. Adams did not take in what the fellow was trying to do until he attempted it the second time. Then he called to him, but it was too late; he had stepped on the cord, and jerked the box, doll and all, from the child's arm. The doll fell, face down, on a stone and broke to pieces. The man gave a great laugh, as the little girl turned, with a cry of anguish, and stooping, began to pick up the fragments, weeping in a low, pitiful way. In a second Adams sprang forward, and struck the fellow a blow between the eyes which sent him staggering off the sidewalk, down in the road, flat on his back. He rose with an oath, but Adams struck him a second blow which laid him out

“NANCY PANSY”

again, and the fellow, finding him to be an officer, was glad to slink off. Adams then turned to the child, whose tears, which had dried for a moment in her alarm at the fight, now began to flow again over her doll.

“Her pretty head ’s all broke! Oh-oh-oh!” she sobbed, trying vainly to get the pieces to fit into something like a face.

The young officer sat down on the ground by her. “Never mind, sissy,” he said, soothingly, “let me see if I can help you.”

She confidently handed him the fragments, whilst she tried to stifle her sobs, and wiped her eyes with her little pinafore.

“Can you do it?” she asked, dolefully, behind her pinafore.

“I hope so. What ’s your name?”

“Nancy Pansy, and my dolly ’s named Harry.”

“Harry!” Tom looked at the doll’s dress and the fragments of face, which certainly were not masculine.

“Yes, Harry Hunter. He ’s my sweetheart,” she looked at him to see if he understood her.

“Ah!”

“And sister’s,” she nodded, confidently.

“Yes, I see. Where is he?”

“He ’s a captain now. He ’s gone away—

AMONG THE CAMPS

away." She waved her hand in a wide sweep to give an idea of the great distance it was. "He 's in the army."

"Come along with me," said Tom; "let 's see what we can do." He gathered up all the broken pieces in his handkerchief, and set out in the direction from which he had come, Nancy Pansy at his side. She slipped her little hand confidingly into his.

"You knocked that bad man down for me, did n't you?" she said, looking up into his face. Tom had not felt until then what a hero he had been.

"Yes," he said, quite graciously. The little warm fingers worked themselves yet further into his palm.

At the corner they turned up the street toward the Court-house Square, and in a few minutes were in camp. At the sight of the child with Adams the whole camp turned out pell-mell, as if the "long-roll" had beat.

At first Nancy Pansy was a little shy, there was so much excitement, and she clung tightly to Tom Adams's hand. She soon found, however, that they were all friendly.

Tom conducted her to his tent, where she was placed in a great chair, with a horse-cover

“NANCY PANSY”

over it, as a sort of throne. The story of O'Meara's act excited so much indignation that Tom felt it necessary to explain fully the punishment he had given him.

Nancy Pansy, feeling that she had an interest in the matter, suddenly took up the narrative.

“Yes, he jus' knocked him down,” she said, with the most charming confidence, to her admiring audience, her pink cheeks glowing and her great eyes lighting up at the recital, as she illustrated Tom's act with a most expressive gesture of her by no means clean little fist.

The soldiers about her burst into a roar of delighted laughter, and made her tell them again and again how it was done, each time renewing their applause over the 'cute way in which she imitated Tom's act. Then they all insisted on being formally introduced, so Nancy Pansy was stood upon the table, and the men came by in line, one by one, and were presented to her. It was a regular levee.

Presently she said she must go home, so she was taken down; but before she was allowed to leave, she was invited to go through the camp, each man insisting that she should visit his tent. She made, therefore, a complete tour, and in every tent some souvenir was pressed upon her,

AMONG THE CAMPS

or she was begged to take her choice of its contents. Thus, before she had gone far, she had her arms full of things, and a string of men were following her bearing the articles she had honored them by accepting. There were little looking-glasses, pin-cushions, pairs of scissors, pictures, razors, bits of gold-lace, cigar-holders, scarf-pins, and many other things.

When she left camp she was quite piled up with things, whilst Tom Adams, who acted as her escort, marched behind her with a large basketful besides. She did not have room to take Harry, so she left her behind, on the assurance of Tom that she should be mended, and on the engagement of the entire company to take care of her. The soldiers followed her to the edge of the camp, and exacted from her a promise to come again next day, which she agreed to do if her mother would let her. And when she was out of sight, the whole command held a council of war over the fragments of Harry.

When Adams reached the Judge's gate he made a negro who was passing take the basket in, thinking it better not to go himself up to the house. He said good-by, and Nancy Pansy started up the walk, whilst he waited at the gate. Suddenly she turned and came back.

“NANCY PANSY”

“Good-by!” she said, standing on tiptoe, and putting up her little face to be kissed.

The young officer stooped over the gate and kissed her.

“Good-by! Come again to-morrow.”

“Yes, if mamma will let me.” And she tripped away with her armful of presents.

Tom Adams remained leaning on the gate. He was thinking of his home far away. Suddenly he was aroused by hearing the astonished exclamations in the house as Nancy Pansy entered. He felt sure that they were insisting that the things should be sent back, and fearing that he might be seen, he left the spot and went slowly back to camp, where he found the soldiers still in a state of pleasurable excitement over Nancy Pansy’s visit. A collection was taken up for a purpose which appeared to interest everybody, and a cap nearly full of money was delivered to Tom Adams, with as many directions as to what he was to do with it as though it were to get a memorial for the Commander-in-chief. Tom said he had already determined to do the very same thing himself; still, if the company wished to “go in” with him, they could do it; so he agreed to take the money.

V

ON the day following Nancy Pansy's visit to the camp of the Baby Veterans, Adams took to the post-office a bundle addressed to "Nancy Pansy," and a letter addressed to a friend of his who was in Washington. The bundle contained "Harry," as fully restored as her shattered state would admit of; the letter contained a draft and a commission, the importance of which latter Captain Adams had put in the very strongest light.

He held his head very high as he dropped his letter into the box, for over the table bent the slender figure of the little dark-eyed postmistress, who had wiped her dainty fingers so carefully after handling his letter. Perched near her on the table, just as she had been that day, with her tangled hair all over her face, was Nancy Pansy. She was, as usual, very busy over something; but, hearing a step, she glanced up.

"Oh, there 's Tom Adams!" she exclaimed; and, turning over on her face, she slipped down

“NANCY PANSY”

from the table and ran up to him, putting up her face to be kissed, just as she always did to the old doctor.

Adams stooped over and kissed her, though, as he did so, he heard her sister turn around, and he felt as if she might be going to shoot him in the back. He straightened up with defiance in his heart. She was facing him; but what was his astonishment when she advanced, and with a little smile on her lovely face, said:

“Captain Adams, I am Miss Seddon. My mother has desired me to thank you in her name, and in all our names, for your act of protection to my little sister on yesterday.”

“Yes,” said Nancy Pansy; “he jus’ knocked that bad man down,” and she gave her little head a nod of satisfaction to one side.

The young officer blushed to his eyes. He was prepared for an attack, but not for such a flank movement. He stammered something about not having done anything at all worthy of thanks, and fell back behind Harry, whom he suddenly pulled out and placed in Nancy Pansy’s hands. It all ended in an invitation from Mrs. Seddon, through Nancy Pansy and her pretty sister, to come up to the house and be thanked, which he accepted.

AMONG THE CAMPS

After this the Baby Veterans and Middleburgh came to understand each other a good deal better than before. Instead of remaining in their camp or marching up and down the streets, with arrogance or defiance stamped on every face and speaking from every figure, the Baby Veterans took to loafing about town in off-duty hours, hanging over the gates, or sauntering in the autumn twilight up and down the quiet walks. They and Middleburgh still recognized that there was a broad ground, on which neither could trespass. The Baby Veterans still sang "The Star-spangled Banner" in the Court-house Grove, and Middleburgh still sang "Dixie" and the "Bonnie Blue Flag" behind her rose trellises; but there was no more gathering up of skirts, and disdainful wiping of hands after handling letters; and the old doctor was allowed to go jogging about on his rounds, with Nancy Pansy and the scarred Harry at his side, as unmolested as if the Baby Veterans had never pitched their tents on the Court-house Square. It is barely possible that even the rigid investment of the town relaxed a little as the autumn changed into winter, for once or twice old Limpid disappeared for several days, as he used to do before his arrest,

“NANCY PANSY”

and Nancy Pansy's pretty sister used to get letters from Harry, who was now a major. Nancy Pansy heard whispers of Harry's coming before long, and even of the whole army's coming. Somehow a rumor of this must have reached the authorities, though Nancy Pansy never breathed a word of it; for an officer was sent down to investigate the matter and report immediately.

Just as he arrived he received secret word from some one that a rebel officer was actually in Middleburgh.

That afternoon Nancy Pansy was playing in the bottom of the yard when a lot of soldiers came along the street, and before them rode a strange, cross-looking man with a beard. Tom Adams was marching with the soldiers, and he did not look at all pleased. They stopped at the old doctor's gate, and the strange man trotted up to her place and asked Nancy Pansy if she knew Captain Harry Hunter.

“Yes, indeed,” said Nancy Pansy, going up to the fence and poking her little rosy face over it; “Harry 's a major now.”

“Ah! Harry 's a major now, is he?” said the strange man.

Nancy Pansy went on to tell him how her

AMONG THE CAMPS

Harry was named after the other Harry, and how she was all broken now; but the officer was intent on something else.

“Where is Harry now?” he asked her.

“In the house,” and she waved her hand toward the old doctor’s house behind her.

“So, so,” said the officer, and went back to Tom Adams, who looked annoyed, and said:

“I don’t believe it; there ’s some mistake.”

At this the strange man got angry and said: “Lieutenant Adams, if you don’t want the rebel caught, you can go back to camp.”

My! how angry Tom was! His face got perfectly white, and he said: “Major Black, you are my superior, or you would n’t dare to speak so to me. I have nothing to say now, but some day I ’ll outrank you.”

Nancy Pansy did not know what they were talking about, but she did not like the strange man at all; so when he asked her: “Won’t you show me where Harry is?” at first she said “No,” and then, “Yes, if you won’t hurt him.”

“No, indeed,” said the man. As Tom Adams was there she was not afraid; so she went outside the gate and on into the old doctor’s yard, followed by the soldiers and Tom Adams, who still looked angry, and told her she ’d better

“NANCY PANSY”

run home. Some of the soldiers went around behind the house.

“Where is he?” the strange gentleman asked.

“Asleep up-stairs in the company-room,” said Nancy Pansy in a whisper. “You must n’t make any noise.”

She opened the door and they entered the house, Nancy Pansy on tiptoe and the others stepping softly. She was surprised to see the strange man draw a pistol; but she was used to seeing pistols, so, though Tom Adams told her again to run home, she stayed there.

“Which is the company-room?” asked the strange man.

She pointed to the door at the head of the steps. “That ’s it.”

He turned to the soldiers.

“Come ahead, men,” he said, in a low voice, and ran lightly up the stairs, looking very fierce. When he reached the door he seized the knob and dashed into the room.

Then Nancy Pansy heard him say some naughty words, and she ran up the stairs to see what was the matter.

They were all standing around the big bed on which she had laid Harry an hour before,

AMONG THE CAMPS

with her head on a pillow; but a jerk of the counterpane had thrown Harry over on her face, and her broken neck and ear looked very bad.

“Oh, you ’ve waked her up!” cried Nancy Pansy, rushing forward, and turning the doll over.

The strange man stamped out of the room, looking perfectly furious, and the soldiers all laughed. Tom Adams looked pleased.

VI

WHEN Tom Adams next called at the Judge's, he found the atmosphere much cooler within the house than it was outside. He had been waiting alone in the drawing-room for some time when Nancy Pansy entered. She came in very slowly, and instead of running immediately up to him and greeting him as she usually did, she seated herself on the edge of a chair and looked at him with manifest suspicion. He stretched out his hand to her.

"Come over, Nancy Pansy, and sit on my knee."

Nancy Pansy shook her head.

"My sister don't like you," she said slowly, eyeing him askance.

"Ah!" He let his hand fall on the arm of the chair.

"No; and I don't, either," said Nancy Pansy, more confidently.

"Why does n't she like me?" asked Tom Adams.

"Because you are so mean. She says **you**

AMONG THE CAMPS

are just like all the rest of 'em;" and, pleased at her visitor's interest, Nancy Pansy wriggled herself higher up on her chair, prepared to give him further details.

"We don't like you at all," said the child, half confidentially and half defiantly. "We like our side; we like *Confederates*." Tom Adams smiled. "We like Harry; we don't like you."

She looked as defiant as possible, and just then a step was heard in the hall, approaching very slowly, and Nancy Pansy's sister appeared in the doorway. She was dressed in white, and she carried her head even higher than usual.

The visitor rose. He thought he had never seen her look so pretty.

"Good-evening," he said.

She bowed. "Good-evening," very slowly, and took a seat on a straight-backed chair in a corner of the room, ignoring the chair which Adams offered her.

"I have not seen you for some time," he began.

"No; suppose you have been busy searching people's houses," she said.

Tom Adams flushed a little.

“NANCY PANSY”

“I carry out my orders,” he said. “These I must enforce.”

“Ah!”

Nancy Pansy did not just understand it all, but she saw there was a battle going on, and she at once aligned herself with her side, and going over, stood by her sister’s chair, and looked defiance at the enemy.

“Well, we shall hardly agree about this, so we won’t discuss it,” said Tom Adams. “I did not come to talk about this, but to see you, and to get you to sing for me.” Refusal spoke so plainly in her face that he added: “Or, if you won’t sing, to get Nancy Pansy to sing for me.”

“*I* won’t sing for you,” declared Nancy Pansy, promptly and decisively.

“What incorrigible rebels all of you are!” said Tom Adams, smiling. He was once more at his ease, and he pulled his chair up nearer Nancy Pansy’s sister, and caught Nancy Pansy by the hand. She was just trying to pull away, when there were steps on the walk outside—the regular tramp, tramp of soldiers marching in some numbers. They came up to the house, and some order was given in a low tone. Both

AMONG THE CAMPS

Adams and Nancy Pansy's sister sprang to their feet.

"What can it mean?" asked Nancy Pansy's sister, more to herself than to Adams.

He went into the hall just as there was a loud rap at the front door.

"What is it?" he asked the lieutenant who stood there.

"Some one has slipped through the lines, and is in this house," he said.

Nancy Pansy's sister stepped out into the hall.

"There is no one here," she said. She looked at Tom Adams. "I give my word there is no one in the house except my mother, ourselves, and the servants." She met Tom Adams's gaze frankly as he looked into her eyes.

"There is no one here, Hector," he said, turning to the officer.

"This is a serious matter," began the other, hesitatingly. "We have good grounds to believe——"

"I will be responsible," said Tom Adams, firmly. "I have been here some time, and there is no one here." He took the officer aside and talked to him a moment.

“NANCY PANSY”

“All right,” said he, as he went down the steps, “as you are so positive.”

“I am,” said Tom.

The soldiers marched down the walk, out of the gate, and around the corner. Just as the sound of their footsteps died away on the soft road, Tom Adams turned and faced Nancy Pansy’s sister. She was leaning against a pillar, looking down, and a little moonlight sifted through the rose-bushes and fell on her neck. Nancy Pansy had gone into the house. “I am sorry I said what I did in the parlor just now.” She looked up at him.

“Oh!” said Tom Adams, and moved his hand a little. “I—” he began; but just then there was a sudden scamper in the hall, and Nancy Pansy, with flying hair and dancing eyes, came rushing out on the portico.

“Oh, sister!” she panted. “Harry’s come; he’s in mamma’s room!”

Nancy Pansy’s sister turned deadly white. “Oh, Nancy Pansy!” she gasped, placing her hand over her mouth.

Nancy Pansy burst into tears, and buried her face in her sister’s dress. She had not seen Tom Adams; she thought he had gone.

AMONG THE CAMPS

"I did not know it," said Nancy Pansy's sister, turning and facing Tom Adams's stern gaze.

"I believe you," he said, slowly. He felt at his side; but he was in a fatigue suit, and had no arms. Without finishing his sentence he sprang over the railing, and with a long, swift stride went down the yard. She dimly saw him as he sprang over the fence, and heard him call, "Oh, Hector!"

As he did so, she rushed into the house. "Fly! they are coming!" she cried, bursting into her mother's room. "Oh, Harry, they are coming!" she cried, rushing up to a handsome young fellow, who sprang to his feet as she entered, and went forward to meet her.

The young man took her hand and drew her to him. "Well," he said, looking down into her eyes, and drawing a long breath.

Nancy Pansy's sister put her face on his shoulder and began to cry, and Nancy Pansy rushed into her mother's arms and cried too.

Ten minutes later soldiers came in both at the front and back doors. Mrs. Seddon met her visitors in the hall. Nancy Pansy's sister was on one side, and Nancy Pansy on the other.

Tom Adams was in command. He removed

“NANCY PANSY”

his hat, but said, gravely: “I must arrest the young rebel officer who is here.”

Nancy Pansy made a movement; but her mother tightened her clasp of her hand.

“Yes,” she said, bowing. That was all.

Guards were left at the doors, and soldiers went through the house. The search was thorough, but the game had escaped. They were coming down the steps when some one said:

“We must search the shrubbery; he will be there.”

“No; he is at his father’s—the old doctor’s,” said Adams.

It was said in an undertone, but Mrs. Seddon’s face whitened; Nancy Pansy caught it, too. She clutched her mother’s gown.

“Oh, mamma! you hear what he says?”

Her mother stooped and whispered to her.

“Yes, yes,” nodded Nancy Pansy. She ran to the door, and poking her little head out, looked up and down the portico, calling, “Kitty, Kitty!”

The sentry who was standing there holding his gun moved a little, and, leaning out, peered into the dusk.

“ ’T ain’t out here,” he said, in a friendly tone.

AMONG THE CAMPS

Nancy Pansy slipped past him, and went down the steps and around the portico, still calling, "Kitty! Kitty! Kitty!"

"Who goes there?" called a soldier, as he saw something move over near the old doctor's fence; but when he heard a childish voice call "Kitty! Kitty!" he dropped his gun again with a laugh. "'T ain't nobody but that little gal, Nancy Pansy; blest if I wa' n't about to shoot her!"

The next instant Nancy Pansy had slipped through her little hole in the fence, through which she had so often gone, and was in the old doctor's yard; and when, five minutes afterward, Tom Adams marched his men up the walk and surrounded and entered the house, Nancy Pansy, her broken doll in her arms, was sitting demurely on the edge of a large chair, looking at him with great, wide-open, dancing eyes. A little princess could not have been grander, and if she had hidden Harry Hunter behind her chair, she could not have shown more plainly that she had given him warning.

VII

ALL Middleburgh knew next day how Nancy Pansy had saved Harry Hunter, and it was still talking about it, when it was one morning astonished by the news that old Dr. Hunter had been arrested in the night by the soldiers, who had come down from Washington, and had been carried off somewhere. There had not been such excitement since the Middleburgh Artillery had marched away to the war. The old doctor was sacred. Why, to carry him off, and stop his old buggy rattling about the streets, was, in Middleburgh's eyes, like stopping the chariot of the sun, or turning the stars out of their courses. Why did they not arrest Nancy Pansy too? asked Middleburgh. Nancy Pansy cried all day, and many times after, whenever she thought about it. She went to Tom Adams's camp and begged him to bring her old doctor back, and Tom Adams said as he had not had him arrested he could not tell what he could do, but he would do all he could. Then she wrote the old doctor a letter. However, all

AMONG THE CAMPS

Middleburgh would not accept Tom Adams's statement as Nancy Pansy did, and instead of holding him as a favorite, it used to speak of him as "That Tom Adams." Every old woman in Middleburgh declared she was worse than she had been in ten years, and old Mrs. HIPPIN took to her crutch, which she had not used in twelve months, and told Nancy Pansy's sister she would die in a week unless she could hear the old doctor's buggy rattle again. But when the fever broke out in the little low houses down on the river, things began to look very serious. The surgeon from the camp went to see the patients, but they died, and more were taken ill. When a number of other cases occurred in the town itself, all of the most malignant type, the surgeon admitted that it was a form of fever with which he was not familiar. There had never been such an epidemic in Middleburgh before, and Middleburgh said that it was all due to the old doctor's absence.

One day Nancy Pansy went to the camp, to ask about the old doctor, and saw a man sitting astride of a fence rail which was laid on two posts high up from the ground. He had a stone tied to each foot, and he was groaning. She looked up at him, and saw that it was the man

“NANCY PANSY”

who had broken her doll. She was about to run away, but he groaned so she thought he must be in great pain, and that always hurt her; so she went closer, and asked him what was the matter. She did not understand just what he said, but it was something about the weight on his feet; so she first tried to untie the strings which held the stones, and then, as there was a barrel standing by, she pushed at it until she got it up close under him, and told him to rest his feet on that, whilst she ran home and asked her mamma to lend her her scissors. In pushing the barrel she broke Harry's head in pieces; but she was so busy she did not mind it then. Just as she got the barrel in place some one called her, and turning around she saw a sentinel; he told her to go away, and he kicked the barrel from under the man and let the stones drop down and jerk his ankles again. Nancy Pansy began to cry, and ran off to Tom Adams's tent and told him all about it, and how the poor man was groaning. Tom Adams tried to explain that this man had got drunk, and that he was a bad man, and was the same one who had broken her doll. It had no effect. "Oh, but it hurts him so bad!" said Nancy Pansy, and she cried until Tom Adams called

AMONG THE CAMPS

a man and told him he might go and let O'Meara down, and tell him that the little girl had begged him off this time. Nancy Pansy, however, ran herself, and called to him that Tom Adams said he might get down. When he was on the ground, he walked up to her and said:

"May the Holy Virgin kape you! Griff O'Meara 'll never forgit you."

A few days after that, Nancy Pansy complained of headache, and her mother kept her in the house. That evening her face was flushed, and she had a fever; so her mother put her to bed and sat by her. She went to sleep, but waked in the night, talking very fast. She had a burning fever, and was quite out of her head. Mrs. Seddon sent for the surgeon next morning, and he came and stayed some time. When he returned to camp he went to Tom Adams's tent. He looked so grave as he came in that Adams asked quickly:

"Any fresh cases?"

"Not in camp." He sat down.

"Where?"

"That little girl—Nancy Pansy."

Tom Adams's face turned whiter than it had ever turned in battle.

“NANCY PANSY”

“Is she ill?”

“Desperately.”

Tom Adams sprang to his feet.

“How long—how long can she hold out?” he asked, in a broken voice.

“Twenty-four hours, perhaps,” said the surgeon.

Tom Adams put on his cap and left the tent. Five minutes later he was in the hall at the Judge’s. Just as he entered, Nancy Pansy’s sister came quickly out of a door. She had been crying.

“How is she? I have just this instant heard of it,” said Tom, with real grief in his voice.

She put her handkerchief to her eyes.

“So ill,” she sobbed.

“Can I see her?” asked Tom, gently

“Yes; it won’t hurt her.”

When Tom Adams entered the room he was so shocked that he stopped still. Mrs. Seddon bent over the bed with her face pale and worn, and in the bed lay Nancy Pansy, so changed that Tom Adams never would have known her. She had fallen off so in that short time that he would not have recognized her. Her face was perfectly white, except two bright red spots on her cheeks. She was drawing short, quick

AMONG THE CAMPS

breaths, and was talking all the time very fast. No one could understand just what she was saying, but a good deal of it was about Harry and the old doctor. Tom bent over her, but she did not know him; she just went on talking faster than ever.

"Nancy Pansy, don't you know Tom Adams?" her mother asked her, in a soothing voice. She had never called the young man so before, and he felt that it gave him a place with Nancy Pansy; but the child did not know him; she said something about not having any Harry.

"She is growing weaker," said the mother.

Tom Adams leaned over and kissed the child and left the room.

As he came down the steps he met Griff O'Meara, who asked how the "little gurl" was, "bless her sowl!" When he told him, Griff turned away and wiped his eyes with the back of his hand. Tom Adams told him to stay there and act as guard, which Griff vowed he 'd do if the "howl ribel army kem."

Ten minutes later Tom galloped out of camp with a paper in his pocket signed by the surgeon. In an hour he had covered the twelve miles of mud which lay between Middleburgh

“NANCY PANSY”

and the nearest telegraph station, and was sending a message to General——, his commander. At last an answer came. Tom Adams read it.

“Tell him it is a matter of life and death,” he said to the operator. “Tell him there is no one else who understands it and can check it, and tell him it must be done before the afternoon train leaves, or it will be too late. Here, I ’ll write it out.” And he did so, putting all his eloquence into the despatch.

Late that night two men galloped through the mud and slush in the direction of Middleburgh. The younger one had a large box before him on his horse; the other was quite an old man. Picket after picket was passed with a word spoken by the younger man, and they galloped on. At last they stopped at the Judge’s gate, and sprang from their splashed and smoking horses.

As they hurried up the walk, the guard at the steps challenged them in a rich Irish brogue.

“It ’s I, O’Meara. You here still? How is she?”

“ ’Most in the Holy Virgin’s arms,” said the Irishman.

“Is she alive?” asked both men.

AMONG THE CAMPS

“It ’s a docther can tell that,” said the sentinel. “They thought her gone an hour ago. There ’s several in there,” he said to his captain. “I did n’t let ’em in at firrst, but the young leddy said they wuz the frien’s of the little gurl, an’ I let ’em by a bit.”

A minute later the old man entered the sick-room, whilst Tom Adams stopped at the door outside. There was a general cry as he entered of “Oh, doctor!”

And Mrs. Seddon called him: “Quick, quick, doctor! she ’s dying!”

“She ’s dead,” said one of the ladies who stood by.

The old doctor bent over the little still white form, and his countenance fell. She was not breathing. With one hand he picked up her little white arm and felt for the pulse; with the other he took a small case from his pocket. “Brandy,” he said. It was quickly handed him. He poured some into a little syringe, and stuck it into Nancy Pansy’s arm, by turns holding her wrist and feeling over her heart.

Presently he said, quietly, “She ’s living,” and both Mrs. Seddon and Nancy Pansy’s sister said, “Thank God!”

All night long the old doctor worked over

“NANCY PANSY”

Nancy Pansy. Just before dawn he said to Mrs. Seddon: “What day is this?”

“Christmas morning,” said Mrs. Seddon.

“Well, madam, I hope God has answered your prayers, and given your babe back to you; I hope the crisis is passed. Have you hung up her stocking?”

“No,” said Nancy Pansy’s mother. “She was so—” She could not say anything more. Presently she added: “She was all the time talking about you and Harry.”

The old doctor rose and went out of the room. It was about dawn. He left the house, and went over to his own home. There, after some difficulty, he got in, and went to his office. His old secretary had been opened and papers taken out, but the old man did not seem to mind it. Pulling the secretary out from the wall, he touched a secret spring. It did not work at first, but after a while it moved, and he put his hand under it, and pulled out a secret drawer. In it were a number of small parcels carefully tied up with pieces of ribbon, which were now quite faded, and from one peeped a curl of soft brown hair, like that of a little girl. The old doctor laid his fingers softly on it, and his old face wore a gentle look. The largest bundle

AMONG THE CAMPS

was wrapped in oil-silk. This he took out and carefully unwrapped. Inside was yet another wrapping of tissue paper. He put the bundle, with a sigh, into his overcoat pocket, and went slowly back to the Judge's. Nancy Pansy was still sleeping quietly.

The old doctor asked for a stocking, and it was brought him. He took the bundle from his pocket, and, unwrapping it, held it up. It was a beautiful doll, with yellow hair done up with little tucking combs such as ladies used to wear, and with a lovely little old tiny-flowered silk dress.

"She is thirty years old, madam," he said gently to Mrs. Seddon, as he slipped the doll into the stocking, and hung it on the bed-post. "I have kept her for thirty years, thinking I could never give it to any one; but last night I knew I loved Nancy Pansy enough to give it to her." He leaned over and felt her pulse. "She is sleeping well," he said.

Just then the door opened, and in tipped Tom Adams, followed by Griff O'Meara in his stocking feet, bearing a large baby-house fitted up like a perfect palace, with every room carpeted and furnished, and with a splendid doll sitting on a balcony.

“NANCY PANSY”

“A Christmas gift to that blessed angel from the Baby Veterans, mem,” he said, as he set it down; and then taking from his bulging pocket a large red-cheeked doll in a green frock, he placed it in the door of the house, saying, with great pride: “An’ this from Griff O’Meara. Heaven bless her swate sowl!”

Just then Nancy Pansy stirred and opened her yes. Her mother bent over her, and she smiled faintly. Mrs. Seddon slipped down on her knees.

‘Where ’s my old doctor and my dolly?’ she said; and then, presently, “Where ’s Harry and Tom Adams?”

“JACK AND JAKE”

I

“**JACK AND JAKE.**” This is what they used to be called. Their names were always coupled together. Wherever you saw one, you were very apt to see the other—Jack, slender, with yellow hair, big gray eyes, and spirited look; and Jake, thick-set and brown, close to him, like his shadow, with his shining skin and white teeth. They were always in sight somewhere; it might be running about the yard or far down on the plantation, or it might be climbing trees to look into birds’ nests—which they were forbidden to trouble—or wading in the creek, riding in the carts or wagons about the field, or following the furrow, waiting a chance to ride a plough-horse home.

Jake belonged to Jack. He had been given to him by his old master, Jack’s grandfather, when Jack was only a few years old, and from that time the two boys were rarely separated,

“JACK AND JAKE”

except at night. Jake was a little larger than Jack, as he was somewhat older, but Jack was the more active. Jake was dull; some people on the plantation said he did not have good sense; but they rarely ventured to say so twice to Jack. Jack said he had more sense than any man on the place. At least, he idolized Jack.

At times the people commented on the white boy being so much with the black; but Jack's father said it was as natural for them to run together as for two calves—a black one and a white one—when they were turned out together; that he had played with Uncle Ralph, the butler, when they were boys, and had taught the latter as much badness as he had him.

So the two boys grew up together as “Jack and Jake,” forming a friendship which prevented either of them ever knowing that Jake was a slave, and brought them up as friends rather than as master and servant.

If there was any difference, the boys thought it was rather in favor of Jake; for Jack had to go to school, and sit for some hours every morning “saying lessons” to his aunt, and had to look out (sometimes) for his clothes, while Jake just lounged around outside the school-room door, and could do as he pleased, for he

AMONG THE CAMPS

was sure to get Jack's suit as soon as it had become too much worn for Jack.

The games they used to play were surprising. Jack always knew of some interesting thing they could "make 'tence" (that is, pretence) that they were doing. They could be fishers and trappers, of course; for there was the creek winding down the meadow, in and out among the heavy willows on its banks; and in the holes under the fences and by the shelving rocks, where the water was blue and deep, there were shining minnows, and even little perch; and they could be lost on rafts, for there was the pond, and with their trousers rolled up to their thighs they could get on planks and pole themselves about.

But the best fun of all was "Injins." Goodness! how much fun there was in Injins! There were bows and arrows, and tomahawks, and wigwams, and fires in the woods, and painted faces, and creeping-ups, and scalpings, and stealing horses, and hot pursuits, and hidings, and captures, and bringing the horses back, and the full revenge and triumph that are dear to boys' hearts. Injins was, of all plays, the best. There was a dear old wonderful fellow named Leatherstocking, who was the greatest "Injin"-

“JACK AND JAKE”

hunter in the world. Jack knew all about him. He had a book with him in it, and he read it and told Jake; and so they played Injins whenever they wanted real fun. It was a beautiful place for Injins; the hills rolled, the creeks wound in and out among the willows, and ran through thickets into the little river, and the woods surrounded the plantation on all sides, and stretched across the river to the Mont Air place, so that the boys could cross over and play on the other side of the thick woods.

When the war came, Jack was almost a big boy. He thought he was quite one. He was ten years old, and grew old two years at a time. His father went off with the army, and left his mother at home to take care of the plantation and the children. That included Ancy and wee Martha; not Jack, of course. So far from leaving any one to take care of Jack, he left Jack to take care of his mother. The morning he went away he called Jack to him and had a talk with him. He told him he wanted him to mind his mother, and look out for her, to help her and save her trouble, to take care of her and comfort her, and defend her always like a man. Jack was standing right in front of him, and when the talk began he was

AMONG THE CAMPS

fidgety, because he was in a great hurry to go to the stable and ride his father's horse Warrior to the house; but his father had never talked to him so before, and as he proceeded, Jack became grave, and when his father took his hand, and, looking him quietly in the eyes, said, "Will you, my son?" he burst out crying, and flung his arms around his father's neck, and said, "Yes, father, I will."

He did not go out of the house any more then; he left the horse to be brought down by Uncle Henry, the carriage-driver, and he sat quietly by his father, and kept his eyes on him, getting him anything he wanted; and he waited on his mother; and when his father went away, he kissed him, and said all over again that he would do what he promised. And when his mother locked herself in her room afterward, Jack sat on the front porch alone, in his father's chair, and waited. And when she came out on the porch, with her eyes red from weeping and her face worn, he did not say anything, but quietly went and got her a glass of water. His father's talk had aged him.

For the first two years, the war did not make much difference to Jack personally. It made a difference to the country, and to the people,

“JACK AND JAKE”

and to his mother, but not to Jack individually, though it made a marked difference in him. It made him older. His father's words never were forgotten. They had sobered him and steadied him. He had seen a good deal of the war. The troop trains passed up the railroad, the soldiers cheering and shouting, filling the cars and crowding on top of them; the army, or parts of it, marched through the country by the county roads, camping in the woods and fields. Many soldiers stopped at Jack's home, where open house was kept, and everything was gladly given to them. All the visitors now were soldiers. Jack rode the gentlemen's horses to water, with Jake behind him, if there was but one (in which case the horse was apt to get several waterings), or galloping after him, if there were more. They were hard riders, and got many falls, for the young officers were usually well mounted, and their horses were wild. But a fall was no disgrace. Jack remembered that his father once said to him, when a colt had thrown him, "All bold riders get falls; only those do not who ride tame horses."

All the visitors were in uniform; all the talk was of war; all thoughts were of the Confeder-

AMONG THE CAMPS

acy. Every one was enthusiastic. No sacrifices were too great to be made. The corn-houses were emptied into the great, covered, blue army wagons; the pick of the horses and mules was given up. Provisions became scanty and the food plain; coffee and tea disappeared; clothes that were worn out were replaced by homespun. Jack dressed in the same sort of coarse, grayish stuff of which Jake's clothes used to be made; and his boots were made by Uncle Dick at the quarters; but this did not trouble him. It was rather fun than otherwise. Boys like to rough it. He had come to care little for these things. He was getting manlier. His mother called him her protector; his father, when he came home, as he did once or twice a year, called him "a man," and introduced him to his friends as "my son."

His mother began to consult him, to rely on him, to call on him. He used to go about with her, or go for her wherever she had business, however far off it might be.

The war had been going on two years, when the enemy first reached Jack's home. It was a great shock to Jack, for he had never doubted that the Confederates would keep them back. There had been a great battle some time before,

“JACK AND JAKE”

and his father had been wounded and taken prisoner (at first he was reported killed). But for that, Jack said, the “Yankees” would never have got there. The Union troops did not trouble Jack personally; but they made a great deal of trouble about the place. They took all the horses and mules that were good for anything and put them in their wagons. This was a terrible blow to Jack. All his life he had been brought up with the horses; each one was his pet or his friend.

After that the war seemed to be much more about Jack’s home than it had been before. The place was in the possession first of one army and then of the other, and at last, one winter, the two armies lay not far apart, with Jack’s home just between them. “The Yankees” were the nearer. Their pickets were actually on the plantation, at the ford, and at the bridge over the little river into which the creek emptied, in the big woods. There they lay with their camps over behind the hills, a mile or two farther away. At night the glow of their campfires could be seen. Jack had a pretty aunt who used to stay with his mother, and many young officers used to come over from the Confederate side to see her. In such cases, they

AMONG THE CAMPS

usually came at night, leaving their horses, for scouting parties used to come in on them occasionally and stir them up. Once or twice skirmishes took place in the fields beyond the creek.

One evening a party of young officers came in and took supper. They had some great plan. They were quite mysterious, and consulted with Jack's mother, who was greatly interested in them. They appeared a little shy of talking before Jack; but when his mother said he had so much judgment that he could be trusted, they talked openly in his presence. They had a plan to go into the Federal camp that night and seize the commanding officer. They wanted to know all the paths. Jack could tell them. He was so proud. There was not a cow-path he did not know for two or three miles around, for he and Jake had hunted all over the country. He could tell them everything, and he did so with a swelling heart. They laid sheets of paper down on the dining-table, and he drew them plans of the roads and hills and big woods; showed where the river could be waded, and where the ravines were. He asked his mother to let him go along with them, but she thought it best for him not to go.

They set out at bed-time on foot, a half-dozen

“JACK AND JAKE”

gay young fellows, laughing and boasting of what they would do, and Jack watched them enviously as their forms faded away in the night. They did not succeed in capturing the officer; but they captured a number of horses and a picket at the bridge, and came off triumphant, with only one or two of their number slightly wounded. Shortly afterwards they came over, and had a great time telling their experiences. They had used the map Jack made for them, and had got safely beyond the pickets and reached the camp. There, finding the sentries on guard, they turned back, and taking the road, marched down on the picket, as if they had come to relieve them. Coming from the camp in this way, they had got upon the picket, when, suddenly drawing their pistols and poking them up against the Yankees, they forced them to surrender, and disarmed them. Then taking two of them off separately, they compelled them to give the countersign. Having got this, they left the prisoners under guard of two of their number, and the rest went back to camp. With the countersign they passed the sentry, and went into the camp. Then they found that the commanding officer had gone off somewhere, and was not in camp that night,

AMONG THE CAMPS

and there were so many men stirring about that they did not dare to wait. They determined, therefore, to capture some horses and return. They were looking over the lines of horses to take their pick when they were discovered. Each man had selected a horse, and was trying to get him, when the alarm was given, and they were fired on. They had only time to cut the halters when the camp began to pour out. Flinging themselves on the horses' backs, they dashed out under a fusillade, firing right and left. They took to the road, but it had been picketed, and they had to dash through the men who held it under a fire poured into their faces. All had passed safely except one, whose horse had become unmanageable, and had run away, flying the track and taking to the fields.

He was, they agreed, the finest horse in the lot, and his rider had had great trouble getting him, and had lingered so long that he came near being captured. He had finally cut the halter, and had cut it too short to hold by.

They had great fun laughing at their comrade, and the figure he cut as his barebacked horse dashed off into the darkness, with him swinging to the mane. He had shortly been

“JACK AND JAKE”

dragged off of him in the woods, and when he appeared in camp next day, he looked as if he had been run through a mill. His eyes were nearly scratched out of his head, and his uniform was torn into shreds.

The young fellow, who still showed the marks of his bruising, took the chaffing good-naturedly, and confessed that he had nearly lost his life trying to hold on to his captive. He had been down into the woods the next day to try and get his horse; though it was the other side of the little river, and really within the Federal lines. But though he caught sight of him, it was only a glimpse. The animal was much too wild to be caught, and the only thing he received for his pains was a grazing shot from a picket, who had caught sight of him prowling around, and had sent a ball through his cap.

The narration of the capture and escape made Jack wild with excitement. All the next day he was in a state of tremor, and that evening he and Jake spent a long time up in the barn together talking, or rather Jack talking and Jake listening. Jake seemed to be doubtful; but Jack's enthusiasm carried all before him, and Jake yielded, as he nearly always did.

AMONG THE CAMPS

All that evening after they got back to the house Jack was very quiet. It was the quiet of suppressed excitement. He was thinking.

Next day, after dinner, he and Jake started out. They were very mysterious. Jack carried a rope that they got from the stable, and the old musket that he used in hunting. Jake carried an axe and some corn. They struck out for the creek as if they were going hunting in the big woods, which they entered; but at the creek they turned and made for about opposite where Jack understood his friend had been thrown by the wild horse that night. They had to avoid the pickets on the roads, so they stuck to the woods.

At the river the first difficulty presented itself; the bridge and ford were picketed. How were they to get across? It was over their heads in the middle. Jack could swim a little, but Jake could not swim a stroke. Besides, they did not wish to get their clothes wet, as that would betray them at home. Jack thought of a raft, but that would take too long to make; so finally they decided to go down the stream and try to cross on an old tree that had fallen into the water two or three years before.

The way down was quite painful, for the

“JACK AND JAKE”

underbrush along the banks was very dense, and was matted with brambles and briars, which stuck through their clothes; added to which there was a danger of “snakes,” as Jake constantly insisted. But after a slow march they reached the tree. It lay diagonally across the stream, as it had fallen, its roots on the bank on their side and the branches not quite reaching the other bank. This was a disappointment. However, Jack determined to try, and if it was not too deep beyond the branches, then Jake could come. Accordingly he pulled off his clothes, and carefully tying them up in a bundle, he equipped himself with a long pole and crawled out on the log. When he got among the branches, he fastened his bundle and let himself down. It was a little over his head, but he let go, and with a few vigorous strokes he reached the other side. The next thing to do was to get Jake over. Jake was still on the far side, and, with his eyes wide open, was declaring, vehemently, “Nor, sir,” he “warn gwine to git in that deep water, over his head.” He “did n’t like water nohow.” Jack was in a dilemma. Jake had to be got over, and so had his clothes. They had an axe. They could cut poles if he could get back. There was

AMONG THE CAMPS

nothing for it but to try. Accordingly he went up a little way, took a plunge, and, after hard pulling and much splashing and blowing, got back to the tree and climbed up. They were afraid the Yankees might see them if they worked too long on the river, as it was a little cleared up on the hill above, so they went back into the woods and set to work. Jack selected a young pine not too large for them to "tote," and they cut it down, and cut off two poles, which they carried down to the river, and finally, after much trouble, worked along the tree in the water, and got them stretched across from the branch of the fallen log to the other bank. Jake could hardly be persuaded to try it, but Jack offered him all his biscuit (his customary coin with Jake), and promised to help him, and finally Jake was got over, "cooning it"—by which was meant crawling on his hands and knees.

The next thing was to find the horse, for Jack had determined to capture him. This was a difficult thing to effect. In the first place, he might not be there at all, as he might have escaped or have been caught; and the woods had to be explored with due regard to the existence of the Federal pickets, who were posted at

“JACK AND JAKE”

the roads and along the paths. If the pickets caught sight of them they might be shot, or even captured. The latter seemed much worse fate to Jack, unless, indeed, the Yankees should send them to Johnson's Island, where his father was. In that case, however, what would his mother do? It would not do to be captured. Jack laid out the plan of campaign. They would “beat the woods,” going up the stream at a sufficient distance apart, Jake, with the axe and corn, on the inside, and he, with the gun and rope, outside. Thus, if either should be seen, it would be he, and if he came on a soldier, he, having the gun, would capture him. He gave orders that no word was to be spoken. If any track was found notice was to be given by imitating a partridge; if danger appeared, it was to be shown by the cat-bird's call of “Naik, naik.” This was the way they used to play “Injins.”

They worked their way along for an hour or two without seeing any traces, and Jake, contrary to Jack's command, called out to him:

“Oh, Jack, we ain' gwine fine no horse down heah; dese woods is too big; he done los'. There 's a clearin' right ahead here; let 's go home.”

AMONG THE CAMPS

There was a little field just ahead, with one old cabin in it; a path ran down from it to the bridge. Jack replied in the cat-bird's warning note of "Naik, naik," but Jake was tired of working his way through briars and bushes, and he began to come over toward Jack, still calling to him. Suddenly there was a shout just ahead; they stopped; it was repeated.

"Who dat calling?" asked Jake, in a frightened undertone.

"Hush! it 's a picket," said Jack, stooping and motioning him back, just as a volume of white smoke with blazes in it seemed to burst out of the woods at the edge of the clearing, and the stillness was broken by the report of half a dozen carbines. Leaves and pieces of bark fell around them, but the bullets flew wide of their mark.

"Run, Jake!" shouted Jack, as he darted away; but Jake had not waited for orders; he had dropped his axe and corn, and was "flying."

Jack soon came up with him, and they dashed along together, thinking that perhaps the picket knew where they had crossed the river, and would try to cut them off.

In their excitement they took a way farther

“JACK AND JAKE”

from the river than that by which they had come. The woods were open, and there were small spaces covered with coarse grass on the little streams. As they ran along down a hill approaching one of these, they heard a sound of trampling coming towards them which brought them to a sudden stand-still with their hearts in their mouths. It must be the enemy. They were coming at full gallop. What a crashing on! They did not have time to run, and Jack immediately cocked his old musket and resolved at least to fight. Just then there galloped up to him, and almost over him, a magnificent bay horse without saddle or bridle. At sight of Jack he swerved and gave a loud snort of alarm, and then, with his head high in the air, and with his dilated red nostrils and eyes wide with fright, went dashing off into the woods.

II

THE horse! the horse! Here he is! here he is!" shouted Jack, taking out after him as hard as he could, and calling to Jake to come on. In a minute or two the horse was far beyond them, and they stopped to listen and get his direction; and while they were talking, even the sound of his trampling died away. But they had found him. They knew he was still there, a wild horse in the woods.

In their excitement all their fear had vanished as quickly as it had come. Jake suggested something about being cut off at the tree, but Jack pooh-poohed it now. He was afire with excitement. How glad his mother would be! What would not the soldiers say? "You did n't see him, Jake?" No, Jake admitted he did not, but he heard him. And Jack described him—two white feet, one a forefoot and one a hind foot, a star in his forehead, and a beautiful mane and tail. Jake suddenly found that he had seen him. They went back to the little

“JACK AND JAKE”

open place in the ravine where the horse had been. It was a low, damp spot between very high banks, that a little higher—at a point where the water in rainy weather, running over a fallen log in the hill-side, had washed out a deep hole—had become nothing but a gully, with the banks quite perpendicular and coming together.

The stream was dry now except for a little water in the hole at the tree. Trees and bushes grew thick upon the banks to the very edge. Below, where it widened, the banks became lower, and the little flat piece between them was covered with coarse grass, now cropped quite close. The horse evidently fed there. Jack sat down and thought. He looked all over the ground. Then he got up, and walked along the banks around the hole; then he came back, and walked up the gully. Suddenly a light broke over his face.

“I ’ve got it, Jake; I ’ve got it, Jake. We can trap him. If we get him in here, we ’ve got him.”

Jake was practical. “How you gwine ketch hoss in trap?” he asked, his idea of a trap being confined to hare gums. “ ’T will take all

AMONG THE CAMPS

de plank in de worl' to make a hoss-trap. Besides, how you gwine git it heah? I ain' gwine tote it."

"Who asked you to?" asked Jack. "I 'm going to trap him like they do tigers and lions."

"I don' know nuttin' 'bout dem beas'es," said Jake, disdainfully.

"No, you don't," said Jack, with fine scorn; "but I do."

He examined the banks carefully. His first idea was a pitfall trap—covering over the hole. But that would not do; it might kill the horse, or at least break a leg. His eye fell on the tracks up to the water. His face lit up.

"I 've got it! I 've got it! We 'll bait him, and then catch him. Where are the axe and corn you had?"

He turned to Jake. His mind up to that time had been so busy with, first, the flight, and then the horse, that he had not noticed that Jake did not have them.

Jake's countenance fell. "I done los' 'em," he said, guiltily.

Jack looked thunderstruck. "Now you just go and find 'em," he said, hotly.

"I los' 'em when dem Yankees shoot we all. I know I ain' gwine back deah," declared Jake,

“JACK AND JAKE”

positively. “I ain’ gwine have no Yankee shootin’ me ’bout a old hoss.”

“Yes, you are,” asserted Jack. “I ’m going, and you ’ve got to go, too.” Jake remained impassive. “Never mind, if you don’t go I won’t play with you any more, and I won’t give you half my biscuit any more.”

These were usually potent threats, but they failed now. “I don’ keer ef you don’ play wid me,” said Jake, scornfully. “I don’ want play so much nohow; an’ I don’ want none you’ biscuit. Dee ain’ white like dee use’ to be.”

Jack changed his key.

“Never mind, that was Aunt Winnie’s axe you lost. I ’m going to tell her you lost it, and she ’ll cut you all to pieces. I ’m mighty glad I did n’t lose it.”

This was a view of the case which Jake had not thought of. It was true. The Yankees might not hit him, but if her axe were lost, his mammy was certain to carry out her accustomed threat of cutting him almost in two. Jake announced that he would go, but first stipulated for the biggest half of the next biscuit, and that Jack should go before. They set off back through the woods toward the opening where they had run on the picket, Jack in the lead, and

AMONG THE CAMPS

Jake a little behind. They had gone about a half-mile, when they heard the sound of some one coming toward them at a rapid rate.

"Run, Jack; heah dey come," cried Jake, setting the example, and taking to his heels, with Jack behind him. They ran, but were evidently being overtaken, for whoever it was was galloping right after them as hard as he could tear.

"Hide in the bushes," cried Jack, and flung himself flat on the ground under a thick bush. Jake did the same. They were just in time, for the pursuers were almost on them. Closer and closer they came, galloping as hard as they could, crashing through the branches. They must have seen them, for they came straight down on them. Jake began to cry, and Jack was trembling, for he felt sure they would be killed; there must be a hundred of them. But no, they actually passed by. Jack found courage to take a peep. He gave a cry, and sprang to his feet.

"The horse! it 's the horse." Sure enough, it was the horse they had seen; all this terrible trampling was nothing but him in the leaves, galloping back toward the spot from which they had frightened him. They listened until his long gallop died out in the distance through the

“JACK AND JAKE”

woods. Jake suggested their going back to look and see if he had gone to the “little pasture,” as they called the place; but Jack was bent on getting the axe, and the corn with which they proposed to bait him. His reference to Aunt Winnie’s axe prevailed, and they kept on.

They had some difficulty in finding the place where Jake had dropped the things, for though they found the clearing, they had to be very careful how they moved around through the woods. They could see the picket lounging about, and could hear them talking distinctly. They were discussing whether the men they had shot at were just scouts or were pickets thrown out, and whether they had hit any of them. One said that they were cavalry, for he had seen the horses; another said he knew they were infantry, for he had seen the men. Jack lay down, and crept along close up.

Jack’s plan was to set a trap for the horse just at the head of the ravine, where the banks became very steep and high. He had read how Indians drove buffalo by frightening them till they all rushed to one point. He had seen also in a book of Livingston’s travels a plan of capturing animals in Africa. This plan he chose.

AMONG THE CAMPS

He proposed to lay his bait along up to the gully, and to make a sort of alleyway up which the horse could go. At the end he would have an opening nearly but not quite closed by saplings inclined toward each other, and which would be movable, so that they might interlace. On either side of this he would have a high barricade. He believed that the horse would be led by the corn which he would strew along into the trap, and would squeeze through the pliant saplings, when he would be caught between the high banks of the gully, and then if he attempted to get back through the opening, he would push the saplings together. He would fix two strong poles so that any attempt to push through would bring them into position. The horse would thus be in a trap formed of the high banks and the barricade. They set to work and cut poles all the evening; but it got late before they got enough for the barricade, and they had to go home. Before leaving, however, Jack dragged some of the poles up, and laid his corn along leading up to the gully to accustom the horse to the sight of the poles and to going into the gully among them. They fixed the two poles firmly at the river crossing from the branch of the tree to the bank, so that they

“JACK AND JAKE”

could get across easily, and then they crossed on them and came home.

Jack was filled with excitement, and had hard work to keep from telling his mother and aunt about it, but he did not.

Jake's fear of his mammy's finding out about the axe kept him silent.

The next afternoon they went down again, taking more corn with them, in case the other bait had been eaten. There were fresh tracks up to the pool, so although they did not see the horse, they knew he had been there, and they went to work joyfully and cut more poles. They put them into position across the ravine, and when it got time to go home they had up the barricade and had fixed the entrance; but this was the most difficult part, so Jack laid down some more corn along the alley, and they went home.

The next day was Saturday, so they had a good day's work before them, and taking their dinner with them, they started out. Jack's mother asked what he was doing; he said, with a smile, "Setting traps." When they arrived the horse had been there, and they worked like beavers all day, and by dinner-time had got the entrance fixed. It worked beautifully. By

AMONG THE CAMPS

pressing in between the two sides they gave way and then sprang together again until they interlaced, and pushing against them from within just pushed them tighter together. They laid their bait down and went home. Monday they visited the trap, but there was no horse in it, the grain was eaten without—he had been there—but inside it was untouched. He had pushed some of the poles so that he could not get in. This was a great disappointment. Jack's motto, however, was, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again," so they refixed it. The failure had somewhat dampened their ardor.

The next afternoon, however, when they went, there was the entrance closed, and inside, turning about continually, with high head and wide eyes, around the edges of which were angry white rims, was the horse. He was even handsomer than they had thought him. He was a dangerous-looking fellow, rearing and jumping about in his efforts to get out. Jake was wild with excitement. The next thing was to take him out and get him home. A lasso would be needed to catch him; for he looked too dangerous for them to go inside the trap to bridle him. Jack strengthened the entrance by placing a

“JACK AND JAKE”

few more poles across it, and then put his corn inside the trap, and hurried home to get a rope and bridle. They were dreadfully afraid that some one might see them, for Jack knew he could not keep the secret now if he met his mother, and he had pictured himself, with Jake behind him, galloping up into the yard, with his horse rearing and plunging, and bringing him up right before his mother, with perhaps a half dozen officers around her. They were back in an hour or so with a good rope and bridle.

Jack made a running noose in the rope, and tried to throw it over the horse's head. He had practised this on stumps and on Jake, playing Injins, until he was right skilful at it; but getting it over the head of a wild and frightened horse was another thing from putting it over a stump, or even over Jake, and it was a long time before he succeeded. He stood on the bank over the horse, and would throw and throw, and fail; the horse got furious, and would rear and strike at them with his fore-feet. At last, just as he was thinking that he could not do it, the noose went over the horse's head. Jack pulled it taut.

In a second the other end was wrapped twice around a small tree on the bank; for Jack knew how to “get a purchase.” The horse reared

AMONG THE CAMPS

and pulled frightfully, but his pulling only tightened the rope around his neck, and at last he fell back choking, his eyes nearly starting out of his head. This was Jack's opportunity. He had often seen young steers caught and yoked this way, and he had bridled young colts. In a second he was in the pen, and had the bridle on the horse, and in another minute he was out and the rope was loosed. The horse, relieved, bounded to his feet and began to wheel again; but he was not so fierce as before. The bridle on his head was recognized by him as a badge of servitude, and he was quieter. It was now late, and he was too wild to take out yet, so Jack determined to leave him there, and come again next day and get him. The next afternoon Jack and Jake set out again for the little meadow in the woods. Jack was bent on bringing his captive home this time, whatever happened.

He did not go until late, for he had to pass the pickets on the road to the river, and he could do this better about dusk than he could in broad daylight. He had an idea that they might think, as he would come from toward the Yankee camp, that it would be all right; if not, he would make a dash for it. He carried a feed of corn with him to give to the horse for two reasons:

“JACK AND JAKE”

the first was that he thought he would need it, and, besides, it would quiet him. They crossed at the old tree, not far from the meadow; they had crossed so often that they had made quite a path now. All the way along Jack was telling Jake how he was going to ride the horse, no matter what he did. Jake was to stand on the ground and hold the rope, so that if the horse flung Jack he would not get loose. They approached the trap with great excitement. They were careful, however, for they did not want to scare him. As they drew near they were pleased to find he had got quiet. They came nearer; he was so quiet that they thought probably he was asleep. So they crept up quite close, Jack in advance, and peeped over the bank into the trap. Jack's heart jumped up into his throat. It was empty! he was gone! Jack could not help a few tears stealing down his cheeks. Yes, he was gone. At first he thought he had escaped, and he could catch him again; but no, an examination of the place showed him that he had been found in the trap by some one, and had been stolen. The barricade was pulled down, and the poles of the entrance were thrown back quite out of the way. Besides, there were men's tracks in the wet place on the edge of the

AMONG THE CAMPS

pool. Jack sat down and cried. It was some of those Yankees, he knew. Jake poured out all his eloquence upon the subject. This relieved him.

“If I had my gun I ’d go right straight and shoot them,” declared Jack.

This valorous resolve set him to thinking. He got up, and went down to the gap. He could see the tracks where the horse was led out. He must have “cut up” a good deal, for the grass outside was very much trampled. Jack could see where he was led or ridden away. The tracks went straight toward the clearing where the picket was. They were quite fresh; he could not very long have been taken. Jack determined to track him, and find out where he was if possible. They set out through the woods. They could follow the track quite well in most places, but in some spots it was almost lost. In such cases Jack followed the method of woodsmen—he took a circle, and hunted until he found it again. The trail led straight to the clearing. As they drew near, Jake became very nervous, so Jack left him lying under a bush, and he crept up. It was so late now that it was getting quite dusk in the woods, so Jack could creep up close. He got down on

“JACK AND JAKE”

his hands and knees. As he came near he could see the men sitting about the little old cabin. They were talking. Their guns were lying against the wall, at some little distance, and their horses were picketed not far off, rather in the shadow, Jack observed. Jack lay down at the edge of the wood and counted them. There were five men and six horses. Yes, one of them must be his horse. He listened to the men. They were talking about horses. He crept a little closer. Yes, they were talking over the finding of his horse. One man thought he knew him, that he was the Colonel's horse that had been stolen that night when so many horses were carried off by the Johnnies; others thought it was a horse some of the negroes had stolen from the plantation across the river from their master, and had hidden. There was the pen and the bridle, and there was the path down to the crossing at the river. Jack's heart beat faster; so they knew the crossing. They were very much divided, but on one thing they all agreed, that anyhow he was a fine animal, worth at least three hundred dollars, and they would have a nice sum from him when they sold him. It was suggested that they should play cards for him,

AMONG THE CAMPS

and whichever one should win should have the whole of him. This was agreed to, and they soon arranged themselves and began to play cards in the moonlight.

Jack could now make out his horse standing tied near the cabin on the outside of the others. He could see in the moonlight that he was tied with a rope. He crept back to Jake, and together they went further down into the woods to consult. Jack had a plan which he unfolded to Jake, but Jake was obdurate. "Nor, sah, he warn' gwine 'mong dem Yankees; Yankees ketch him and shoot him. He was gwine home. Mammy 'd whup him if he did n'; she mought whup him anyway." Jack pleaded and promised, but it was useless. He explained to Jake that they could ride home quicker than they could walk. It was of no avail. Jake recalled that there was a Yankee picket near the bridge, and that was the only place a horse could cross since the ford was stopped up. Finally Jack had to let Jake go.

He told him not to say anything at home as to where he was, which Jake promised, and Jack helped him across the poles at the tree, and then went back alone to the clearing. He crept up as before. The men were still playing cards,

“JACK AND JAKE”

and he could hear them swearing and laughing over their ill or good luck. One of them looked at his watch. The relief would be along in twenty minutes. Jack's heart beat. He had no time to lose. He cut himself a stout switch. He made a little detour, and went around the other side of the clearing, so as to get the horse between him and the men. This put him on the side toward the camp, as the men were on the path which led to the bridge. Without stopping, he crept up to the open space. Then he flung himself on his face, and began to crawl up through the weeds toward the horses, stopping every now and then to listen to the men. As he drew near, one or two of the horses got alarmed and began to twist, and one of them gave a snort of fear. Jack heard the men discussing it, and one of them say he would go and see what was the matter. Jack lay flat in the weeds, and his heart almost stopped with fright as he heard the man coming around the house. He could see him through the weeds, and he had his gun in his hands. He seemed to be coming right to Jack, and he gave himself up as lost. He could hear his heart thumping so, he was sure the man must hear it too. He would have sprung up and cut for the woods if he had had

AMONG THE CAMPS

the slightest chance; and as it was, he came near giving himself up, but though the man seemed to be looking right toward him, Jack was fortunately so concealed by the weeds that he did not observe him. He went up to Jack's horse, and examined the rope. " 'T ain't nothing but this new horse," he called out to his comrades. "He just wanted to see his master. I 'll put my saddle on him now, boys. I 've got him so certain, and I mean to let him know he 's got a master." He changed the saddle and bridle from another horse to that, and then went back to his comrades, who were all calling to him to come along, and were accusing him of trying to take up the time until the relief came, because he was ahead, and did not want to play more and give them a chance to win the horse back.

Jack lay still for a minute, and then took a peep at the men, who were all busily playing. Then he crept up. As soon as he was out of sight, he sprung to his feet and walked boldly up to the horse, caught him by the bit, and with a stroke of his knife cut the rope almost in two close up to his head. Then he climbed up on him, gathered up the reins, fixed his feet in the stirrup leathers, bent over, and with a single

“JACK AND JAKE”

stroke cut the rope and turned him toward the bridge. The horse began to rear and jump. Jack heard the men stop talking, and one of them say, “That horse is loose”; another one said, “I ’ll go and see”; another said, “There ’s the relief.” Jack looked over his shoulder. There came a half-dozen men on horses. There was no time to lose. Lifting his switch above his head, Jack struck the horse a lick with all his might, and with a bound which nearly threw Jack out of his seat, he dashed out into the moonlight straight for the road. “He ’s loose! there ’s a man on him!” shouted the men, springing to their feet. Jack leaned forward on his neck and gave him the switch just as a volley was fired at him. Pop, pop, pop, pop went the pistols; and the balls flew whistling about Jack’s head: but he was leaning far forward, and was untouched. Under the lash the horse went flying down the path across the little field.

III

JACK had often run races on colts, but he had never ridden such a race as that. The wind blew whistling by him; the leaves of the bushes over the path cut him, hissing as he dashed along. If he could pass the thicket where the path struck the road near the bridge, he would be safe. The path was on an incline near the road, and was on a straight line with the bridge, so he had a straight dash for it. The picket was just beyond the fork. Jack had often seen them. There were generally two men on the bridge, and a pole was laid across the railing of the bridge near the other side. But Jack did not think of that now; he thought only of the men galloping behind him on his track. He could not have stopped the horse if he would, but he had no idea of trying it. He was near the bridge, and his only chance was to dash by the picket. Down the path he went as straight as an arrow, his splendid horse leaping under his light weight—down the path like a bullet through the dusk of the woods. The sleepy

“JACK AND JAKE”

picket had heard the firing at the clearing up on the hill, and had got ready to stop whoever it might be. They were standing in the road, with their guns ready. They could not make it out. It was only a single horse coming tearing down toward them.

“Halt, halt!” they called, before Jack was in sight; but it was idle. Down the path the horse came flying—Jack with his feet in the stirrup leathers, his hands wrapped in the bridle reins, his body bent forward on his horse’s neck, and clucking his tongue out. In one bound the horse was in the road. “Halt!” Bang! bang! went the guns in his very face. But he was flying. A dozen leaps and he was thundering across the bridge. Jack was conscious only that a dark form stood in the middle, throwing up its arms. It was but a second; he saw it shot out into the water as if struck by a steam-engine. His horse gave one splendid leap, and the next minute he was tearing up the road toward home, through the quiet woods, which gave no sound but that of his rushing stride.

Jack had one moment of supreme delight. His mother had got somewhat anxious about him, and they were all on the front porch when he galloped up into the yard, his beautiful bay

AMONG THE CAMPS

now brought down under perfect control, but yet full of life and spirit. As they ran to meet him, Jack sprang from the saddle and presented the horse to his mother.

The next day Jack's mother called him into her room. She took him by the hand. "My son," she said, "I want you to carry the horse back and return him to the Yankee camp."

Jack was aghast. "Why, mamma, he 's my horse; that is, he is yours. I found him and caught him and gave him to you."

His mother explained to him her reasons. She did not think it was right for him to keep the horse obtained in such a way. Jack argued that he had found the horse running wild in their own woods, and did not know his owner. This made no difference; she told him the horse had an owner. He argued that the soldiers took horses, had taken all of theirs, and that their own soldiers—the gentlemen who had come to tea—had been over and taken a lot from the camp. His mother explained to him that that was different. They were all soldiers wearing uniforms, engaged openly in war. What they took was capture; Jack was not a soldier, and was not treated as one. Jack told her how he had been shot at and chased. She was firm. She

“JACK AND JAKE”

wished the horse returned, and though Jack wept a little for the joint reason of having to give up the horse and the mortification of restoring it to the Yankees, he obeyed. He had some doubt whether he would not be captured; but his mother said she would write a letter to the commanding officer over there, explaining why she returned the horse, and this would be safe-conduct. She had known the colonel before the war, and he had once stopped at her house after a little battle beyond them. Colonel Wilson had, in fact, once been a lover of hers.

The idea of going with a safe-conduct was rather soothing to Jack's feelings; it sounded like a man. So he went and fed the horse. Then he went and asked Jake to go with him. Jake was very doubtful. He was afraid of the Yankees catching him. The glory of Jack's capture the night before had, however, given Jack great prestige, and when Jack told him about the letter his mother was going to write as a safe-conduct—like a “pass,” he explained—Jake agreed to go, but only on condition that he might carry the pass. To this Jack consented. It was late in the afternoon when they started, for the horse had to be broken to carry double, and he was

AMONG THE CAMPS

very lively. Both Jack and Jake went off again and again. At last, however, they got him steady, and set out, Jack in the saddle, and Jake behind him clinging on. Jake had the letter safe in his pocket for their protection. They had a beautiful ride through the woods, and Jack remembered the glorious race he had had there the night before. As they approached the bridge, Jack thought of tying his handkerchief on a stick as a flag of truce; but he was not sure, as he was not a real soldier, he ought to do so. He therefore rode slowly on. He pictured to himself the surprise they would have when he rode up, and they recognized the horse, and learned that he had captured it.

This feeling almost did away with the mortification of having to return it. He rode slowly as he neared the bridge, for he did not want them to think he was a soldier and shoot at him. Jack was surprised when he got to the bridge to find no men there. He rode across, and not caring to keep up the main road, turned up the path toward the clearing. He rode cautiously. His horse suddenly shied, and Jack was startled by some one springing out of the bushes before him and calling "Halt!" as he flung up his

“JACK AND JAKE”

gun. Jake clutched him, and Jack halted. Several men surrounded them, and ordered them to get down. They slipped off the horse, and one of the men took it. They all had guns.

“Why, this is the Colonel’s thoroughbred that was stolen two weeks ago,” declared one of the men. “Where did you steal this horse?” asked another of them, roughly.

“We did not steal him,” asserted Jack, hotly. “We found him and caught him in the woods.”

“You hear that?” The man turned to his comrades. “Come, little Johnnie, don’t tell lies. We ’ve got you, and you were riding a stolen horse, and there were several others stolen at the same time. You ’d better tell the truth, and make a clean breast of it, if you know what ’s good for you.”

Jack indignantly denied that he had stolen the horse, and told how they had caught him and were bringing him back. He had a letter from his mother to Colonel Wilson, he asserted, to prove it.

“Where is the letter?” they asked.

Jack turned to Jake. “Jake ’s got it in his pocket.”

“Yes, I got de pass,” declared Jake, feeling

AMONG THE CAMPS

in his pocket. He felt first in one and then another. His countenance fell. "Hi! I done los' it," he asserted.

The soldiers laughed. That was a little too thin, they declared. Come, they must go with them. They proposed to put a stop to this horse-stealing. It had been going on long enough. A horse was stolen only last night, and the man had run over one of the pickets on the bridge, and had knocked him into the river and drowned him. They were glad to find who it was, etc.

Jack felt very badly. Jake came close up to him and began to whisper. "Jack, what dey gwine do wid us?" he asked.

"Hang you, you black little horse-stealing imp!" said one of the men, with a terrific force. "Cut you up into little pieces."

The others laughed. Men are often not very considerate to children. They do not realize how helpless children feel in their power. Both Jack and Jake turned pale.

Jake was ashy. "Jack, I told you not to come," he cried.

Jack acknowledged the truth of this. He had it on his tongue's end to say, "What did you lose the letter for?" but he did not. He felt

“JACK AND JAKE”

that as his father's son he must be brave. He just walked close to Jake and touched him. “Don't be scared,” he whispered. “We will get away.”

Just then one of the men caught Jake and twisted his arm a little. Jake gave a little whine of fright. In an instant Jack snatched a gun from a man near by him, and cocking it, levelled it at the soldier. “Let Jake go. or I 'll blow your brains out,” he said.

A hand seized him from behind, and the gun was jerked out of his hand. It went off, but the bullet flew over their heads. There was no more twisting of Jake's arm, however. The soldiers, after this, made them march along between them. They carried them to the clearing where the old house was, and where some of their comrades were on guard awaiting them. They marched the boys up to the fire. “We 've got the little horse-thieves,” they declared. “They were coming over after another horse; but I guess we 'll break it up now.”

“Why, they are mighty little fellows to be horse-thieves,” said one.

“They are the worst kind,” declared the other.

“Must be right bad, then, corporal, for you

AMONG THE CAMPS

are pretty handy yourself," declared a comrade.

"We are not any horse-thieves," asserted Jack. "We found this horse."

"Shut up!" ordered one of his captors. They began to talk about what they would do with them. Several methods of securing them were proposed, and it was finally determined to lock them up in the loft of the old cabin till morning, when they would carry them to camp, and the Colonel would make proper disposition of them.

"Can't they get away in there?" asked one man.

"No; there is a bolt on the outside of the door," said another. "Besides, we are all down here."

They were accordingly taken and carried into the house and up the rickety old stairs to the loft, where they were left on the bare floor with a single blanket. It was quite dark in there, and Jack felt very low down as he heard the bolt pushed into the staple on the outside. Jake was crying, and Jack could not help sobbing a little himself. He had, however, to comfort Jake, so he soon stopped, and applied himself to his work. The only comfort Jake took was in his assurance that he would get him out.

AMONG THE CAMPS

“How you gwine do it?” asked Jake.

“Never mind, I ’ll do it,” declared Jack, though he had no idea how he was to make good his word. He had taken good notice of the outside of the cabin, and now he began to examine the inside. As his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he could see better, and as they were barefooted, they could walk about without any noise. The old roof was full of holes, and they could see the sky grow white with the rising moon. There was an old window in one end of the loft. There were holes in the side, and looking out, Jack could see the men sitting about, and hear their voices. Jack tried the window; it was nailed down. He examined it carefully, as he did every other part of the room. He decided that he could cut the window out in less time than he could cut a hole through the roof.

He would have tried the bolt, but some of the men were asleep in the room below, and they could not pass them. If they could get out of the window, they might climb down the chimney. He had nothing but his old pocket-knife, and unfortunately a blade of that was broken; but the other was good. He told Jake his plan, who did not think much of it. Jack thought it

AMONG THE CAMPS

was bedtime, so he knelt down and said his prayers. When he prayed for his mother he felt very badly, and a few tears stole out of his eyes. When he was done, Jack began to work. He worked carefully and quietly at first, making a cut or two, and then listening to see if any one stirred below. This was slow work, and after a while he began to cut harder and faster. It showed so very little that he presently got impatient, and dug his knife deeper into the plank. It took a good hold, he gave a vigorous pull, and the blade snapped off in the middle. It made so much noise that one of the men below asked:

“What are those boys doin’ upstairs there? They ain’t tryin’ to git away, yo s’pose, are they? If so, we better fetch ’em down here.”

Jack flung himself down beside Jake and held his breath. The soldiers listened, and then one of them said:

“Oh, no, ’t ain’t nothin’ but rats. They ’re fast asleep, I guess.”

Jack almost gave himself up for lost, for he now had only his broken blade; but after a while he went at it again, more carefully. He could see that he was making headway now, and he kept on cutting. Jake went fast asleep

“JACK AND JAKE”

in the blanket, but Jack kept on. After a time he had nearly cut out one of the planks; he could get a hold on it and feel it give. At this point his impatience overcame him. He took hold and gave a wrench. The plank broke with a noise which startled not only Jake lying in his blanket, but the men below, one or two of whom sprang up. They began to discuss the noise.

“That war’n’t no rats,” said one. “Them boys is trying to git out. I heard the window open. Go and see what they are doing,” he said to his comrade.

Jack held his breath.

“You go yourself,” said he. “I say it ’s rats.”

“Rats! You ’ve got rats,” said the other. “I ’ll go, just to show you ’t ain’t rats.”

He got up, and taking a torch, came to the stair. Jack felt his heart jump up in his mouth. He just had time to stuff his hat into the hole he had made, to shut out the sky, and to fling himself down beside Jake and roll up in the blanket, when the bolt was pulled back and the man entered. He held the torch high above his head and looked around. Jack felt his hair rise. He could hear his heart thumping, and was sure the man heard it too. Jake stirred. Jack

AMONG THE CAMPS

clutched him and held him. The man looked at them. The flame flickered and died, the man went out, the bolt grated in the staple, and the man went down the shaky stair.

“Well, you are right for once,” Jack heard him say. “Must have been rats; they are both fast asleep on the floor.”

Jack waited till the talk died away, and then he went to work again. He had learned a lesson by this time, and he worked carefully. At last he had the hole big enough to creep through. It was right over the shoulder of the rickety old log chimney, and by making a quick turn he could catch hold of the “chinking” and climb down by it. He could see the men outside, but the chimney would be partly between them, and as they climbed down the shadow would, he believed, conceal them. He did not know how long he had been working, so he thought it best not to wait any longer. Therefore, after taking a peep through the cracks down on the men below, and finding them all asleep, he began to wake Jake. Having got him awake, he lay down by him and whispered his plans to him. He would go first to test the chimney, and then Jake would come. They were not to speak under any circumstances, and if

“JACK AND JAKE”

either slipped, they were to lie perfectly still. The blanket—except one piece, which he cut off and hung over the hole to hide the sky, in case the men should come up and look for them—was to be taken along with them to fling over them if their flight should be discovered. The soldiers might think it just one of their blankets. After they got to the woods, they were to make for their tree. If they were pursued, they were to lie down under bushes and not speak or move. Having arranged everything, and fastened the piece of blanket so that it hung loosely over the hole, allowing them to get through, Jack crawled out of the window and let himself down by his hands. His bare feet touched the shoulder of the chimney, and letting go, he climbed carefully down. Jake was already coming out of the window. Jack thought he heard a noise, and crept around the house through the weeds to see what it was. It was only a horse, and he was turning back, when he heard a great racket and scrambling, and with a tremendous thump Jake came tumbling down from the chimney into the weeds. He had the breath all knocked out of him, and lay quite still. Jack heard some one say, “What on earth was that?” and he had only time to throw the blanket over

AMONG THE CAMPS

Jake and drop down into the weeds himself, when he heard the man come striding around the house. He had his gun in his hand. He passed right by him, between him and the dark blanket lying in the corner. He stopped and looked all around. He was not ten feet from him, and was right over the blanket under which Jake lay. He actually stooped over, as if he was going to pull the blanket off of Jake, and Jack gave himself up for lost. But the man passed on, and Jack heard him talking to his comrades about the curious noise. They decided that it must have been a gun which burst somewhere. Jack's heart was in his mouth about Jake. He wondered if he was killed. He was about to crawl up to him, when the blanket stirred and Jake's head peeped out, then went back. "Jake, oh Jake, are you dead?" asked Jack, in a whisper.

"I dun know; b'lieve I is," answered Jake. "Mos' dead, anyway."

"No, you ain't. Is your leg broke?"

"Yes."

"No, 't ain't," encouraged Jack. "Waggle your toe; can you waggle your toe?"

"Yes; some, little bit," whispered Jake, kicking under the blanket.

“JACK AND JAKE”

“Waggle your other toe—waggle all your toes,” whispered Jack.

The blanket acted as if some one was having a fit under it.

“Your leg ain’t broke; you are all right,” said Jack. “Come on.”

Jake insisted that his leg was broken, and that he could not walk.

“Crawl,” said Jack, creeping up to him. “Come on, like Injins. It ’s getting day.” He started off through the weeds, and Jake crawled after him. His ankle was sprained, however, and the briars were thick, and he made slow progress, so Jack crawled along by him through the weeds, helping him.

They were about half way across the little clearing when they heard a noise behind them; lights were moving about in the house, and, looking back, Jack saw men moving around the house and a man poked his head out of the window.

“Here ’s where they escaped,” they called. Another man below the window called out, “Here ’s their track, where they went. They cannot have gone far. We can catch them.” They started toward them. It was the supreme moment.

AMONG THE CAMPS

“Run, Jake; run for the woods,” cried Jack, springing to his feet and pulling Jake up. They struck out. Jake was limping, however, and Jack put his arm under him and supported him along. They heard a cry behind them of, “There they go! catch them!” But they were almost at the woods, and a second later they were dashing through the bushes, heading straight for their crossing at the old tree. After a time they had to slow up, for Jake’s ankle pained him. Jack carried him on his back; but he was so heavy he had frequently to rest, and it was broad day before they got near the river. They kept on, however, and after a time reached the stream. There Jake declared he could not cross the poles. Jack urged him, and told him he would help him across. He showed him how. Jake was unstrung, and could not try it. He sat down and cried. Jack said he would go home and bring him help. Jake thought this best. Jack crawled over the pole, and was nearly across, when, looking back, he saw a number of soldiers on the hill riding through the woods.

“Come on, Jake; here they come,” he called. The soldiers saw him at the same moment, and some of them started down the hill. A shot or two were fired toward them; Jake began to

“JACK AND JAKE”

cry. Jack was safe, but he turned and crawled back over the pole toward him. “Come on, Jake; they are coming. They won’t hit you—you can get over.”

Jake started; Jack waited, and reached out his hand to him. Jake had gotten over the worst part, when his foot slipped, and with a cry he went down into the water. Jack caught his hand, but it slipped out of his grasp. He came up with his arms beating wildly. “Help—help me!” he cried, and went down again. In went Jack head foremost, and caught him by the arm. Jake clutched him. They came up. Jack thought he had him safe. “I ’ve got you,” he said. “Don’t—” But before he could finish the sentence, Jake flung his arm around his neck and choked him, pulling him down under the water, and getting it into his throat and nostrils. Jack struggled, and tried to get up, but he could not; Jake had him fast. He knew he was drowning. He remembered being down on the bottom of the river and thinking that if he could but get Jake to the top again he would be safe. He thought that the Yankees might save him. He tried, but Jake had him tight, choking him. He thought how he had brought him there; he thought of his mother and father,

AMONG THE CAMPS

and that he had not seen his mother that morning, and had not said his prayers, and then he did not know anything more.

The next thing he knew, some one said, "He 's all right," and he heard confused voices, and was suffering some in his chest and throat, and he heard his mother's voice, and opening his eyes he was in a tent. She was leaning over him, crying and kissing him, and there were several gentlemen around the bed he was on. He was too weak to think much, but he felt glad that his mother was there. "I went back after Jake," he said, faintly.

"Yes, you did, like a man," said a gentleman in an officer's uniform, bending over him. "We saw you."

Jack turned from him. "Mother," he said, feebly, "we carried the horse back, but—"

"He is just outside the door," said the same gentleman; "he belongs to you. His owner has presented him to you."

"To me and Jake!" said Jack. "Where is Jake?" But they would not let him talk. They made him go to sleep.

TWO PRISONERS

Acknowledgments are made to Messrs. Harper & Brothers, in whose magazine, "Harper's Young People," when under the management of the late Alfred B. Stacey, some years ago, this story in a condensed form first appeared. The story has been rewritten and amplified.—T. N. P.

.

**TO THE MEMORY OF
ALFRED B. STAREY**

TWO PRISONERS

SQUEEZED in between other old dingy houses down a dirty, narrow street paved with cobble-stones, and having, in place of sidewalks, gutters filled with gray slop-water, stood a house, older and dingier than the rest. It had a battered and knock-kneed look, and it leant on the houses on either side of it, as if it were unable to stand up alone. The door was just on a level with the street, and in rainy weather the water poured in and ran through the narrow little passage leaving a silt of mud in which the children played and made tracks. The windows were broken in many places, and were stuffed with old rags, or in some places had bits of oilcloth nailed over the holes. It looked black and disreputable even in that miserable quarter, and it was. Only the poorest and the most unfortunate would stay in such a rookery. It seemed to be in charge of or, at least, ruled over

TWO PRISONERS

by a woman named Mrs. O'Meath, a short, red-faced creature, who said she had once been "a wash lady," but who had long given up a profession which required such constant use of water, and who now, so far as could be seen, used no liquid in any way except whiskey or beer.

The dingiest room in this house was, perhaps, the little hall-cupboard at the head of the second flight of rickety stairs. It was small and dim. Its single window looked out over the tops of wretched little shingled houses in the bottom below to the backs of some huge warehouses beyond. The only break in the view of squalor was the blue sky over the top of the great branching elm shading the white back-portico of a large house up in the high part of the town several squares off. In this miserable cupboard, hardly fit to be called a room, unfurnished except with a bed and a broken chair, lived a person—a little girl—if one could be said to live who lies in bed all the time. You could hardly tell her age, for the thin face looked much older than the little crooked body. There were lines around the mouth and about the white face which might have been worn by years or only by suffering. The bed-ridden

TWO PRISONERS

body was that of a child of ten or twelve. The arms and long hands looked as the face did—older—and as she lay in her narrow bed she might have been any moderate age. Her sandy hair was straight and faded; her dark eyes were large and sad. She was known to Mrs. O'Meath and the few people who knew her at all as "Molly." If she had any other name, it was not known. She had no father or mother, and was supposed by the lodgers to be some relative, perhaps a niece, of Mrs. O'Meath. She had never known her father. Her mother she remembered dimly, or thought she did; she was not sure. It was a dim memory of a great brightness in the shape of a young woman who was good to her and who seemed very beautiful, and it was all connected with green trees and grass, and blue skies, and birds flying about. The only other memory was of a parting, the lady covering her with kisses, and then of a great loneliness, when she did not come back, and then of a woman dropping her down the stairs—and ever since then she had been lying in bed. At least, that was her belief; she was not sure that the memory was not a dream. At least, all but the bed, that was real.

Ever since she knew anything she had been

TWO PRISONERS

lying a prisoner in bed, in that room or some other. She did not know how she got there. She must belong in some way to Mrs. O'Meath, for Mrs. O'Meath looked after her and kept others away. It was not much "looking after," at best. Mrs. O'Meath used to bring her her food, such as it was—it was not very much—and attend to her wants, and bring her things to sew, and make her sew them. Molly suffered sometimes, for she could not walk; she had never walked—at least, unless that vague recollection was true. She had once or twice asked Mrs. O'Meath about her mother, but she had soon stopped it. It always made Mrs. O'Meath angry, and she generally got drunk after it and was cross with her.

Sometimes when Mrs. O'Meath got drunk she did not come up-stairs at all during the day. She was always kinder to her next day, however, and explained, with much regret, that she had been sick—too sick to get a mouthful for herself even; but other people who lived in the house told Molly that she was "just drunk," and Molly soon got to know the signs. Mrs. O'Meath would be cross and ugly and made her sew hard. Sometimes she used to threaten her with the Poorhouse. Molly did not know what

TWO PRISONERS

that was; she just knew it was something dreadful (like a prison, she thought). She could not complain, however, for she knew very well that what Mrs. O'Meath did was out of charity for her and because she had promised some one to look after her. The little sewing Molly was able to do for her was not anything, she knew. Mrs. O'Meath often told her so. And it made her back ache so to sit up.

The rest of the people in the house were so busy they did not have time to trouble themselves about the child, and Mrs. O'Meath was cross with them if they came "poking about," as she called it.

Molly's companions were two books, or parts of books—one a torn copy of the "Pilgrim's Progress," the other a copy of the "Arabian Nights' Entertainment." Neither of them was complete, but what remained she knew by heart. She used to question the women in the house, when they would stop at the door, about things outside; but they knew only about their neighbors and their quarrels and misfortunes—who got drunk; who had a new sofa or frock; who had been arrested or threatened by the police, and who had been refused a drink at the bar. Molly's questions about the fairies and great

TWO PRISONERS

ladies simply set her down with them as a half crazy thing. So Molly was left to her own thoughts. Her little bed was fortunately right by the window, and she could look out over the houses. The pigeons which circled about or walked upon the roofs, pluming themselves and coquetting, and the little brown sparrows which flew around and quarrelled and complained, were her chief companions, and she used to make up stories about them. She soon learned to know them individually, even at a distance, and knew where they belonged. She learned their habits and observed their life. She knew which of them were quiet, and which were blustering; which were shy, and which greedy—most of them were this—and she used to feed them with crumbs on the window-sill. She gave them names out of her books and made up stories about them to herself. They were fairies or genii, and lived under spells; they saw things hidden from the eyes of men, and heard strange music which the ears of men could not catch. One bird, however, interested her more than all the others. It was a bird in a cage, which used to hang outside of the back window of a house not far from hers, but on another street. This bird Molly watched more closely than all the

TWO PRISONERS

rest, and had more feeling for it. Shut up within the wire bars, whilst all the other birds were flying so free and joyous, it reminded her of herself. It had not been there very long. It was a mocking-bird, and sometimes it used to sing so that she could hear its notes clear and ringing. She felt how miserable it must be, confined behind its bars, when there was the whole sky outside for it to spread its wings under. (It used to sing almost fiercely at times. Molly was sure that it was a prince or princess imprisoned in that form.) Shortly after it first came it sang a great deal, yet Molly knew it was not for joy, but only to the sky and the birds outside; for it used to flutter and look frightened and angry whenever the woman leaned out of the window; and sometimes the birds would go and look at it in a curious, half-pitying way, and it would try to fly, and would strike against the cage and fall down, and then it would stop singing for awhile. Molly would have loved to pet it, and then have turned it loose and seen it flying away singing. She knew what joy would have filled its little heart to see again the woods and the green fields and pastures and streams, for she knew how she would have felt to see them. She had

TWO PRISONERS

never seen them in all her life, unless she had not dreamed that dream. Maybe, if it were set free, it would come back sometimes and would sing for her and tell her about freedom and the green fields. Or, maybe, it might even go to Heaven and tell her mother about her.

The bird had not always been in a cage; it had been born in a lilac bush in a great garden, with other lilac bushes and tall hollyhocks of every hue, and rose bushes all around it; and it had been brought up there, and had found its mate in an orchard near by, where there were apple trees white with bloom and a little stream bordered with willows, which sometimes looked almost white, too, when the wind blew fresh and lifted the leaves. It had often sung all night long in the moonlight to its mate; and one day, when it was getting a breakfast for the young in its nest in the lilacs, it had been caught in a trap with slats to it; and a man had come and had carried it somewhere in a close basket, and had put it into a thing with bars all around it like a jail, and with a dirty floor; and a woman had bought it and had kept it shut up ever since in a cage. It had come near starving to death for a while, for at first it could not eat the seed and stuff which covered the bottom of its cage, they were so stale; but at last it had to eat, it

TWO PRISONERS

was so hungry. It grew sick, though, not being used to being shut up in such a close, hot place, with people always moving about. Though its owner was kind to it, and talked to it, and was gentle with it, it could not forget its garden and freedom, and it hoped it would die. The woman used to hang it outside of her window, and after she went away it used to sing, hoping that its mate might hear, and, even if it could not release it, at least might come near enough to sing to it and tell it of its love and loneliness, and of the garden and the lilacs and the orchard and the dew. Then, again, when she did not come, it would grow melancholy, and sometimes would try desperately to break out of its prison. Sometimes at night it would dream of the lilacs and would sing. How Molly watched it and listened to it, and how she pitied it and hoped it knew she was there, too!

One other thing that interested Molly greatly was the great gray house over beyond the other houses. She supposed it was a palace. There she could see a little girl walking about in the long upper gallery—sometimes alone and sometimes with a colored woman, her nurse. Molly had very keen eyes and could see clearly a long distance; but she could not, of course, see the features of the little girl. She could only tell

TWO PRISONERS

that she had long brown hair, and wore beautiful dresses, sometimes white, sometimes blue, sometimes pink. She knew she must be beautiful, and wondered if she were a princess. She always pictured her so, and she was always on the watch for her. At times she came out with something in her arms, which Molly knew was a doll, and Molly used to fancy how the doll looked; it must have golden ringlets, and blue eyes, and pink cheeks, and look like a princess. Molly felt sure that the little girl must be a princess. The doll would be dressed in silk and embroidery. She set to work, and with her scraps, left from the pieces Mrs. O'Meath brought her, made a dress and a whole suit of clothes for it, such as she thought it ought to have. The dress was nothing but a little piece of shiny cambric, trimmed with her silk bits, and the underclothes were only cotton; but she flounced the dress with ends of colored thread and embroidered it beautifully, and folded it up in a piece of paper and stuck it away under the mattress where she kept her treasures.

One day she saw the little girl on the gallery playing with something that was not a doll; it ran around after her and hung on to her skirt. At first Molly could not see it well; but pres-

TWO PRISONERS

ently the little girl lifted it up in her arms, and Molly saw that it was a little dog, a fat, grayish-yellow puppy. For several days it used to come out and play with its little mistress, or she would play with it, lifting it, carrying it, feeding it, hugging and kissing it. Molly sighed. Oh, how she would have liked to have a little dog like that! Her little room looked darker and gloomier than ever. She turned over and tried to sleep, but could not. She was so lonely. She had nothing; she had never had anything. She could not ever hope to have a doll, but, oh, if she had a puppy! Next day she thought of it more than ever, and every day afterwards she thought of it.

She even dreamed about it at night: a beautiful, fat, yellow puppy came and got up by her on the bed and cuddled up against her and went to sleep. She felt its breathing. She actually saved some of her dinner, her bones, next day, and hid them, to feel that she had some food for it, though she was hungry herself. No puppy came, however, and she had to give it up and content herself with looking out for the puppy on the white gallery under the elm beyond the housetops.

II

THE big house, the back of which, with its double porticos and great white pillars, Molly could see away up on the hill across the intervening squares, was almost as different from the rickety tenement in which the little cripple lay as daylight is from darkness. It was on one of the highest points in the best part of the city, and was set back in grounds laid off with flower beds and surrounded by a high iron fence. In front it looked out on a handsome park, where fountains played, and at the back, while it looked over a very poor part of the town, filled with small, wretched-looking houses, they were so far beneath it that they were almost as much separated from it as though they had been in another city. A high wall and a hedge quite shut off everything in that direction, and it was only from the upper veranda that one knew there was any part of the town on that side. Here, however, Mildred, the little girl that Molly saw with her doll and puppy, liked best to play.

TWO PRISONERS

Mildred was the daughter of Mr. Glendale, one of the leading men in the city, and she lived in this house in the winter. In the summer she lived in the country, in another house, quite as large as this, but very different. The city house was taller than that in the country, and had finer rooms and handsomer things. But, somehow, Mildred liked the place in the country best. The house in the country was long and had many rooms and curious corners with rambling passages leading to them. It was in a great yard with trees and shrubbery and flowers in it, with gardens about it filled with lilacs and rosebushes, and an orchard beyond, full of fruit trees. Green fields stretched all about it, where lambs and colts and calves played. And when in the country Mildred played out of doors all day long.

The city Mildred did not like. She was a little lame and had to wear braces; but the doctors had always said she must be kept out of doors, and she would become strong and outgrow her lameness. Thus she had been brought up in the country, and knew every corner and cranny there. She knew where the robins and mocking-birds nested; the posts where the blue-birds made their homes and brought up their

TWO PRISONERS

young, and the hollow locusts where the brown Jenny Wrens kept house, with doors so tiny that Mildred could not have gotten her hand in them. In town she felt constrained. There she had to be dressed up and taken to walk by her mammy. In the country she never thought of her lameness; but in town she could not help it. It was hard not to be able to run about and play games like the other children. Rough boys, too, would talk about the braces she had to wear, and sometimes would even laugh at her. So she was shy, and often thought herself very wretched. Her mother and her mammy used to tell her that she was better off than most little girls, but Mildred could not think so. At least, they did not have to wear braces, and could run about where they pleased and play games and slide down hills without any one scolding them for ruining their dresses or not being a lady. Mildred often wished she were not a lady, and, though efforts were made to satisfy her least whim, she was dissatisfied and unhappy.

A large playroom was set apart for her in town; and it was fitted up with everything that could be thought of. After the first few days it ceased to give her pleasure. The trouble was that it was all "fixed," her playthings were all

TWO PRISONERS

“made playthings.” She had to play according to rule; she could not do as she pleased. In the country she was free; she could run about the yard or garden, and play with the young birds and chickens and “live” things. One “live” thing was, in Mildred’s eyes, worth all the “made” ones in the world; and if it was sick or crippled, she just loved it. A lame chicken that could not keep up with the rest of the brood, or a bird that had broken its wing falling out of the nest, was her pet and care. Her playroom in town was filled with dolls and toys of every size and kind, and in every condition, for a doll’s condition is different from that of people; it depends not on the house it lives in and the wealth it has, but on the state of its body and features. Mildred’s playhouse in the country was a corner of a closet, under the roof. There she used to have war with her mammy, for Mammy was very strict, and had severe ideas. So whenever a sick chicken or lame duck was found crying and tucked up in some of the doll’s best dresses, there was a battle. “I don’t want dolls,” Mildred would say. “It don’t hurt a doll to break it; they don’t care; and it don’t help them to mend them; they can’t grow. I want something I

TWO PRISONERS

can get well and feed.” Indeed, this was what her heart hungered for. What she wanted was company. She felt it more in the city than in the country. In town she had nothing but dolls. She used to think, “Oh, if I just had a chicken or a bird to pet and to love—something young and sweet!” The only place in town where she could do as she pleased was the upper back veranda. Thus she came to like it better than any other spot, and was oftenest there.

III

ONE day when Mildred had been dressed up by her mammy and taken out to walk, as she stopped on the edge of the park to rest, a fat, fawn-colored puppy, as soft as a ball of wool and as awkward as a baby, came waddling up to her on the street; pulled at her dress; rolled over her feet, and would not let her alone. Mildred was delighted with it. It was quite lame in one of its legs. She played with it, and hugged it, and fed it with a biscuit; and it licked her hands and pinched her with its little white, tack-like teeth. After a while Mammy tried to drive it away, but it would not go, it had taken too great a fancy to its new found playmate to leave her, and, though Mammy slapped at it and scolded it, and took a switch and beat it, it just ran off a little way and then turned around when they moved on and followed them again, coming up to them in the most cajoling and enticing way. When they reached home Mammy shut it out of the gate; but it stayed there and cried, and finally squeezed through

TWO PRISONERS

the fence, scraping its little fat sides against the pickets, and, running up to the porch after them, slipped into the house, and actually ran and hid itself from Mammy under some furniture in the drawing-room.

Mildred begged her father to let her keep the dog. He said she might, until they could find the owner, but that it was a beautiful puppy and the owner would probably want him. Mildred took him to her veranda and played with him, and that night she actually smuggled him into her bed; but Mammy found him and turned him out of so snug a retreat, and Mildred was glad to compromise on having him safely shut up in a box in the kitchen. Her father put an advertisement in the papers and every effort was made to find the owner, but he never appeared, which was perhaps due to Mildred's fervent prayers that he might not be found. She prayed hard that he might not come after Roy, as she named him, even if he had to die not to do so.

From that time Mildred found a new life in the city. The two were always together, playing and romping. Roy was the most adorable of puppies, and was always doing the most comical and unexpected things. At times he

TWO PRISONERS

would act like a baby, and at other times would be as full of mischief as a boy.

The upper gallery was Mildred's favorite place. Her mother had given it up to her. There she could run about, without having Mammy scold her for letting Roy scratch up the floor. Roy made havoc in her playroom; he appeared to have a special fondness for doll babies, and would chew their feet off recklessly. He did not have a wholly easy time, however, for Mildred used to insist on dressing him up and making him sleep in her doll's carriage, and, as Roy had the bad taste not to appreciate these honors, he had to be trained. Mammy had been strict enough with Mildred to give her very sound ideas of discipline, so sometimes Mildred used to coerce Roy till he rebelled with whines. It was all due to affection, however, and Roy used to whine more over the huggings his little mistress gave him than anything else.

"What you squeezin' dat dog so for? Stop dat! Don' you heah him crying?" Mammy used to say.

" 'T ain' any use havin' a dog if you earn't squeeze him," Mildred would reply.

Whenever they went out Roy used to go along. Roy was a most inquisitive dog. Curi-

TWO PRISONERS

osity was his besetting sin. It got him into more trouble than anything else. He used to chew up lace curtains, and taste the silk of the chair covers in the parlors just to try them, though anything else would have done just as well; and once or twice he actually tried the bottom of Mammy's dress. This was a dreadful mistake for him to make, as he found out, for Mammy allowed no liberties to be taken with her.

"Ain't you got no better sense 'n to be chawing my frock, dog?" she used to say. "Ef you ain't, I gwine teach you better." And she did.

When he went out to walk he carried his curiosity to great limits; indeed, as it proved, to a disastrous length. He had grown somewhat and could run about without tripping up over himself every few steps; and as he grew a little older he was always poking into strange yards or around new corners. Once or twice he had come near getting into serious trouble, for large dogs suddenly bounded up from door-mats and out of unnoticed corners and appeared very curious to know what business he, a little, fat puppy, had coming into their premises uninvited. In such cases Roy always took out as hard as his little fat legs could carry

TWO PRISONERS

him; or, if they ran after him, he just curled over on his back, holding up his feet in the most supplicating way, till no dog would have had the heart to hurt him.

At last one day he disappeared, and no efforts could find him. He was hunted for high and low; advertisements were put in the papers; a reward was offered, and every exertion was made to find him; but in vain. The last that had been seen of him he was playing out in the street in front of the house, and had gone down a side street. It was in the direction of the worst part of the town, and, after he did not turn up, there was no doubt that he was stolen, or maybe killed. Mildred was inconsolable. She cried herself almost sick. Her father offered to get her another puppy just like Roy; but it did no good; it would not be Roy, she said; it would not be lame. The sight of the dolls which Roy had so often chewed with so much pleasure made her cry afresh. She prayed that he might come back to her.

IV

THAT very afternoon on which Roy disappeared Molly had just got her dinner—a little soup, with a knuckle-bone in it, and a piece of bread—and she was thinking what a pity the bone was so large, as she was hungry, when she heard something on the staircase outside. The door had been left slightly open by the woman who had brought the dinner, and the sound was quite distinct; it sounded like something dragging up the steps. She thought it was a rat, for there were a great many of them about, and she was wishing the door was shut, for she did not want it to come into her room, and, besides, it was cold. But as she could not reach the door, she was about to begin on her dinner. Just as she started, however, she heard a soft and low step at her door, and she looked up. There came a dear, fat, yellow-gray puppy, with a black nose, walking in just as straight and solemnly as if he were a doctor and had a visit to pay. She did not dare to move for fear he would be frightened and go

TWO PRISONERS

out; but he did not trouble himself. Walking straight on, he took a glance around as if to assure himself that this was the place he wanted, and then, looking at her, he gave a queer little switch of his tail, which twisted half his body in the funniest way, and, quickening his pace, came trotting up to her bed and reared up to try and climb up on it. Molly put her hand over on it, and he began to lick it rapidly and whimper in his efforts to get up. She gave a little cry of delight and, catching him, pulled him up on the bed. He immediately began to walk over her and lick her face. It was the first time she had ever been kissed in her life that she remembered. The next thing he did was to poke his little head into her soup bucket, and begin to eat it as if it belonged to him. He finished the soup and began at the bone. This gave him the greatest delight. He licked and nibbled and chewed it; got his fat paws in, and worked over it. Molly, too, got the greatest pleasure out of it. She forgot that she was hungry.

Suddenly he lay down and went fast asleep snuggled up against her. Molly felt as if he were a little fat baby curled up in her arm. Her life seemed suddenly to have opened. The only trouble was the fear that Mrs. O'Meath

TWO PRISONERS

might take him away and drive him out. To prevent this was her dream. She thought of hiding him, but this was difficult; besides, she wanted to tell Mrs. O'Meath about him.

The puppy stayed with her that night, sleeping beside her, and snuggling up against her like a little child. Molly had never spent so happy a night.

Next morning by light he was awake hunting for his knuckle-bone, and when he got it went to work at it. In the midst of Molly's reflections Mrs. O'Meath walked in. Her eye fell on Roy, and Molly's heart sank.

"What 's that dirty dog doin' in this room?"

Roy answered for himself. The hair on his back rose and he began to bark. Molly tried to check him.

"Where did ye git him?"

"Oh, Mrs. O'Meath, please, madam, let me keep him. He came from heaven. I have n't anything, and I want him so. Hush! You must not bark at Mrs. O'Meath. Hush, sir!"

But Roy just pulled loose, and, standing astride of Molly, barked worse than ever.

"Not I, indeed. Out he goes. 'Ave I to be slavin' meself to death for the two of you? It

TWO PRISONERS

is n't enough for the wan of you, and him bark-in' at me like that."

"Oh, Mrs. O'Meath, please, madam! I will sew for you all my life, and do everything you want me to do," cried Molly. "O God, don't let her take him away from me!" she prayed.

Whether it was that Mrs. O'Meath was troubled by the great, anxious eyes of the little girl, and did not have the heart to tear the dog away from her, or whether she thought that perhaps Roy was a piece of property worth preserving, she did not take him away. She simply contented herself with abusing him for "a loud-mouthed little baste," and threatening to "teach him manners by choking the red, noisy tongue out his empty head." She actually brought him a new knuckle-bone at dinner-time, which greatly modified his hostility. No puppy can resist a knuckle-bone.

Roy had been with Molly four days, and they had been the sweetest days of the crippled girl's life. He had got so that he would play with his bones on the floor, rolling them as a child does a ball. He would come when Molly called him, and would play with her, and he slept on her bed beside her. One day he walked out of the

TWO PRISONERS

room and went down the steps. Molly called and called, but to no purpose. He had disappeared; he was gone. Molly's heart was almost broken. Her room suddenly became a prison; her life was too dark to bear.

Mildred had prayed and prayed in vain that Roy might come back to her, and had at length confided to Mammy that she did not believe he was coming, and she was not going to pray any more. She was sure now that she was the most wretched child in the world. She took no pleasure in anything, even in the finest new doll she had ever seen. However, she was playing with her doll on the front portico that morning when Roy came walking up the steps as deliberately as if he had just gone out. She gave a little shriek of delight, and ran forward. Seeing her, he came trotting up, twisting himself as he always did when he was pleased. She called her mother. There was a great welcoming, and Roy was petted like the returned prodigal. Mildred determined never again to let him get out of her sight.

Looking out of her little window next day Molly saw her little girl on the white gallery romping with a dog, and her heart was bitter with envy. She glanced down at the cage be-

TWO PRISONERS

low her, and the mocking-bird, which, whilst she had the puppy she had almost forgotten, was drooping on his perch.

Mildred, however, though she watched Roy closely, did not have a wholly easy time. After this Roy had a wandering fever. One day he was playing in the yard with Mildred, who was about to give him a roll she had. Near where they were playing stood a rose-bush covered with great red roses. Mildred thought it would be great fun to take a rose and tease Roy with it. So she turned and broke off from the bush one of the finest. It took some little time, and when she turned back, Roy, whether offended at being neglected or struck by some recollection, had squeezed through the fence, and started down the street. Mildred called after him, but he paid no attention to her. She opened the gate and ran after him.

“Roy, Roy!” she called. “Here, Roy, come here.”

But Roy took no heed of her; he just trotted on. When she ran faster he ran, too, just as if she were a stranger. He turned into another street and then another. She had to hurry after him for fear she might lose him. He reached a dirty little narrow street and

TWO PRISONERS

turned in. She was not far behind him, and she saw the door he went into. She ran to it. He was going up the stairs, climbing steadily one after another. As she did not see anybody to catch him she went on up after him. She saw him enter a door that was slightly ajar, and when she reached it she started to follow him in, but at the sight that caught her eye she stopped on the threshold. There was Roy up on a bed licking the face of a little girl, and acting as if he were wild with joy.

V

MOLLY'S day had been very dark. It was dark without and within. She had suffered a great deal. She had seen the little girl on the gallery playing with her puppy and running about, and her own life had seemed very wretched. Mrs. O'Meath was drunk and had threatened her with the Poorhouse, and she had not got any breakfast; she was very unhappy.

It seemed to her that she and the bird in the cage outside the window were the most wretched things in the world. She thought of her mother, and wondered if she should go to Heaven if she would know her. Perhaps, she would not want her. She lay back and looked around her little dark room, and then shut her eyes and began to pray very hard. It was not much of a prayer, just a fragment, beginning, "Our Father, who art in Heaven"—which had somehow stuck in her memory, and which she always used when she wanted anything. Just then she heard a noise outside on the steps. It

TWO PRISONERS

came pulling up step by step, and Roy trotted in at the open door and came bouncing and twisting over toward the bed. In an instant she had him on the bed, and he was licking her face and walking over her. She heard a noise at the door and was aware that some one was there, and, looking up, she saw standing in the door the most beautiful creature she had ever beheld—a little girl with brown curls and big brown eyes. She was bareheaded and beautifully dressed, and her eyes were wide open with surprise. In her hand she held a small green bough, with a wonderful red thing on the end. Molly thought she must be a fairy or an angel.

Mildred had stopped for a moment and was looking at Molly.

In her sympathy for the poor little thing lying there she forgot all about Roy. Her eyes were full of pity.

“How do you do?” she said, coming softly to the bedside.

“Oh, very well, thank you,” said Molly. “My dog has come back.”

“Why, is he your dog, too? He ’s my dog,” said Mildred.

TWO PRISONERS

The face of the crippled child fell.

"Is he? I thought he was mine. I hoped he was. He came in one day, and I did n't know he belonged to anybody but me. I had been lying here so long I hoped he would always stay with me."

The face looked so sad. The large eyes looked wistful, and Mildred was sorry that she had claimed the dog. She thought for a moment.

"I will give him to you," she said, eagerly.

Molly's eyes lit up.

"Oh, will you? Thank you so much."

"Have you got anything to feed him on?" asked Mildred.

"Yes, some bones I put away for him." She pulled from under the side of the bed two bones wrapt in paper, and Roy at once seized them and began to gnaw at them.

"I have a roll here I will give him," said Mildred. "I shall have my lunch when I get back."

She held out her roll. Molly's eyes glistened.

"Can I have a little piece of it?" she asked timidly; "I have n't had any breakfast."

Mildred's eyes opened wide.

TWO PRISONERS

“Have n’t had any breakfast, and nearly lunch time! Are you going to wait till luncheon?”

“‘Luncheon?’ What is that?” said Molly. “I get dinner generally; but I am afraid I may n’t get any to-day. Mrs. O’Meath is drunk.”

She spoke of it as if it were a matter of course. Mildred’s face was a study. The idea of such a thing as not getting enough to eat had never crossed her mind. She could not take it in.

“Here, take this; eat all of it. I will get my mother to send you some dinner right away, and every day.” She took hold of Molly’s thin hand and stroked it in a caressing, motherly sort of way. “What is your name?” She leaned over her and stroked her little dry brow, as her mother did hers when she had a headache.

“Molly.”

“Molly what?”

“I don’t believe I ’ve got any other name,” said Molly. “My mother was named Mary.”

“Where is she?” asked Mildred.

“She ’s dead.”

“And your father?”

TWO PRISONERS

“Kilt!” said Molly. “ ’T least I reckon he was. Mrs. O’Meath says he was. I don’t know whether he ’s dead or not.”

Mildred’s eyes opened wide. The idea of any one not knowing whether or not her father was living!

“Who is Mrs. O’Meath?” she asked.

“She ’s the lady ’t takes care of me.”

“Your nurse?”

“N—I don’t know. She ain’t my mother.”

“Well, she don’t take very good care of you, I think,” said Mildred, looking around with an air of disapproval.

“Oh! she ’s drunk to-day,” explained Molly, busily eating her bread.

“Drunk!” Mildred’s eyes opened with horror.

“Yes. She ’ll be all right to-morrow.” Her eyes, over the fragment of roll yet left, were fastened on the rose which Mildred, in her chase after Roy, had forgotten all about and still held in her hand.

“What is that?” she asked, presently.

“What? This rose?” Mildred held it out to her.

“A rose!” The girl’s eyes opened wide with wonder, and she took it in her thin hands as

TWO PRISONERS

carefully as if it had been of fragile glass. "Oh! I never saw one before."

"Never saw a rose before! Why, our garden and yard are full of them. I break them all the time."

"Are you a princess?" asked Molly, gazing at her.

Mildred burst out into a clear, ringing laugh.

"No. A princess!"

Molly was perhaps a little disappointed, or perhaps she did not wholly believe her. She stroked the rose tenderly, and then held it out to Mildred, though her eyes were still fastened on it hungrily.

"You can have it," said Mildred, "for your own."

"Oh! For my own? My very own?" exclaimed the cripple, her whole face lit up. Mildred nodded.

"Oh! I never thought I should have a rose for my own, for my very own," she declared, holding it against her cheek, looking at it, smelling it and caressing it all at once, whilst Mildred looked on with open-eyed wonder and enjoyment.

Mildred asked a great many questions, and

TWO PRISONERS

Molly told her all she knew about herself. She had been lying there in that little room for years without ever going out, and she had never seen the country. Mildred learned all about her life there; about the birds outside and the bird in the cage. Mildred could see it from the window when she climbed upon the bed. She thought of the roses in her garden and of the birds that sang around her home, flying about among the trees, and to think that Molly had never seen them! Her heart ached. It dawned upon her that maybe she could arrange to have her see it. She asked what she would rather have than anything in the world.

“In the whole world?” asked Molly.

“Yes, in the whole world.”

Molly thought profoundly. “I would rather have that bird out there in the cage,” she said.

Mildred was surprised and a little disappointed.

“Would you?” she asked, almost in a whisper. “Well, I will ask my mamma to give me some money to buy it for you. I ’ve got to go now.”

Roy, who had been asleep, suddenly opened

TWO PRISONERS

his eyes and looked lazily at her. He crawled a little closer up to Molly and went asleep again.

"Here," said Molly, "take this."

She pulled out of her little store inside the bed where she kept her treasures concealed a little bundle. It was her doll's wardrobe. Mildred opened it.

"Why, how beautiful! Where did you get it? It would just fit one of my new dolls."

"I made it," said Molly.

"You did? I wish I could make anything like that," said Mildred, admiring the beautiful work.

"Would you mind something?" Molly asked, timidly. "Would you let me kiss you?" She looked at her pathetically.

Mildred leaned over and kissed the poor little pale lips.

"Thank you," said Molly, with a flush on her pale cheeks.

"Good-bye. I will come again," said Mildred, gravely. The eyes of the crippled girl brightened.

"Oh! will you! Thank you."

Mildred leaned over and kissed her again.

As she walked down the dark stairs and out

TWO PRISONERS

of the narrow damp street into the sunlight she seemed to enter a new world. It came to her how different her lot was, not only from that of the poor little crippled girl lying in that dark prison up that rickety stair, but from many and many others who wanted nearly everything she had in such abundance. She almost trembled to think how ungrateful and complaining she had been, and a new feeling seemed to take possession of her.

VI

DURING the hour of Mildred's absence there had been great excitement at her home. They thought she was lost, and they were all hunting for her everywhere when she walked in with her little bundle in her hand. She might ordinarily have been punished for going off without permission, but now they were all too glad to see her back, and she had such a good excuse. Even Mammy confined herself to grumbling just a little. Mildred rushed to her mother's room and told her everything about her visit—about Molly and everything connected with her. She drew so graphic a picture of the little cripple's condition that her mother at once had a basket of food prepared and ordered her carriage. Mildred begged to go with her, so they set out at once. She had taken notice of the house, and, after driving up one or two streets, they found the right one. She asked her mother to let her carry the basket. When they entered the room Mildred's mother found it even worse than Mildred had

TWO PRISONERS

pictured it; but a half hour's vigorous work made a great change, and that night, for the first time in many years, Molly slept in a clean bed and in as much comfort as her poor little broken body would admit.

That night Mildred could hardly sleep for happiness. She had the money to buy the mocking-bird. Inquiry was made next day on the street where Mildred described the bird as being. It was found that the only bird on the block belonged to a Mrs. Johnson, "a widow lady who took in sewing." She lived in the third story back room of a certain house and had not been there very long, so no one could tell anything about her except that she owned "a mocker." This, however, was all that was needed, and Mildred was promised that next morning the bird should be bought and she should be allowed to take it to Molly with her own hands. She planned just the way in which she would surprise her.

Next morning a servant was sent around to buy the bird. When he returned Mildred's high hopes were all dashed to the ground. The owner did not wish to sell the bird. The money was doubled and the servant was sent back. The answer came back: "The bird was not for

TWO PRISONERS

sale." Mildred was grievously disappointed. She could not help crying.

"Send to the dealer's and buy two birds," said her father.

"Perhaps the bird is a pet," suggested her mother gently.

Mildred thought Molly did not want any bird—she wanted that one, though she herself did not understand just why, unless it was that she knew that one could sing.

"Then Molly is unreasonable," said Mildred's father.

Mildred was unreasonable, too. If Molly did not want any other bird she did not want it either. She persuaded her mammy to walk around through the street where the woman with the mocking-bird lived. She knew the house. Just as she passed it the door opened and a woman came down the steps with a bundle. She was dressed in black and looked very poor, but she also looked very kind, and Mildred, who was gazing at the door as she came out, asked her timidly:—"Do you know Mrs. Johnson?"

"Why, I am one Mrs. Johnson," she said. "Whom do you mean?"

TWO PRISONERS

"The lady that has the mocking-bird," said Mildred.

"I have a mocking-bird."

"Have you? I mean the lady that has a mocking-bird and won't sell it," said Mildred, sadly.

The woman looked down at her kindly and for a moment did not answer. Then she said:—"What do you know about it?"

"I wanted to buy it," said Mildred.

"I am sorry I could not sell it to you," said Mrs. Johnson kindly. "The bird is all the company I have, and besides I don't think it is well. It has not been singing much lately."

"Has n't it?" asked Mildred. "I wanted it for Molly. She wants it."

"Who is Molly?"

"The little crippled girl that lives around that way." She pointed. "She lies at a window away, way up. You can almost see her out of your window where the cage hangs. She saw the bird from her window where she lies and that 's the reason she wants it."

The woman looked down at the little girl thoughtfully. The big eyes were gazing up at her with a look of deep trouble in them.

TWO PRISONERS

"You can have the bird," she said suddenly. "Wait, I will get it." And before Mildred could take in her good fortune she had gone back into the house, and a second later she brought down the cage.

Mildred had not just understood that it was to be brought her then, and a new difficulty presented itself.

"But I have n't any money," she said.

"I don't want any money," said the poor lady.

"But I can send it to you."

"I don't want any; I give it to you."

Mildred was not sure that she ought to accept the bird this way. "Do you think mamma would mind it?" she asked earnestly.

"Not if she ever had a crippled child," said the woman.

"She had. But I 'm well now," said Mildred.

She took the cage and bore it down the street, talking to her mammy of the joy Molly would have when she took the bird to her. The poor woman suddenly turned and went back into the house and up the stairs, and a second later was leaning out of the window scanning one by one every window in sight.

Mildred and her mammy soon found the

TWO PRISONERS

rickety house where Molly lived, and as Mildred climbed the stairs to Molly's room, though she walked as softly as she could, her heart was beating so she was afraid Molly might hear it. Curious faces peeped at her as she went up, for the visit to Molly of the day before was known, but Mildred did not mind them. She thought only of Molly and her joy. She reached the door and opened it softly and peeped in. Molly was leaning back on her pillow very white and languid; but she was looking for her, and she smiled eagerly as she caught her eye. Mildred walked in and held up the cage. Molly gave a little scream of delight and reached out her hands.

"Oh, Mildred, is it—?" She turned and looked out of the window at the place where it used to hang. Yes, it was the same.

Mildred had a warm sensation about the heart, which was perfect joy.

"Where shall I put it?" she asked. "He looks droopy, but Mrs. Johnson says he used to sing all the time. He is not hungry, because he has feed in the cage. I don't know what is the matter with him."

"I do," said Molly, softly.

She showed where she wanted the cage, and

TWO PRISONERS

Mildred climbed up and put it in the open window. Then she propped Molly up. She had never seen Molly's eyes so bright, and her cheeks had two spots of rich color in them. She looked really pretty. She put her arm around the cage caressingly. The frightened bird fluttered and uttered a little cry of fear.

"Never mind," murmured Molly, softly, as she pulled at the catch. "It is only a minute more, and there will be the fields and the sky."

The peg was drawn out and she opened the door wide. The bird did not come out; it just fluttered backwards and forwards. Molly pushed the cage a little further out of the window. The bird got quiet. It turned its head and looked out of the door. Mildred had clasped her hands tightly, and was looking on with speechless surprise. She thought it might be some spell of Molly's. The bird hopped out of the cage on to the window-sill and stood for a second in a patch of sunlight. It craned its neck and gazed all around curiously; turned and looked at the cage, and then fastened its eye steadily on Molly, shook itself in the warm air, gave a little trill, almost a whimper, and suddenly tore away in the sunlight.

Mildred gave a little gasp, "Oh!" But

TWO PRISONERS

Molly did not move a muscle. Straight away the bird flew, at first up and then on over the black houses and the smoke toward the blue sky over Mildred's home, his wings beating the fresh spring air, on, on, growing smaller to the sight, flying straight for the open country—a mere speck—till at last he faded from sight. Molly lay motionless, with her gaze still on the fair blue sky where he had disappeared, as if she could still see him. Her lips had been moving, but now were stilled.

“There!” she said, softly. “At last!” and sank back on the pillow, her eyes closed, her face full of deep content. Mildred sat and gazed at her, at first with a vague wonder and then almost with awe. A new idea seemed to enter her mind. Could Molly be sending the mocking-bird to heaven with a message to her mother?

VII

THE poor lady who had given Mildred the bird was still leaning out of her window studying the backs of the houses on the other street down below hers in the direction the little girl had gone, when at the top window of one of the oldest and most tumbled-down houses there was a movement, and a flash of sunlight on something caught her eye. Yes, that was the place. Looking hard, she could make out what was going on. She could see the cage set on the window-sill and two little figures on the bed at the open window. It was a flash of sunshine on the cage which had reached her. She knew now where the bird would hang, and if it ever sang again she would be able to hear it faintly. In the distant past she had heard birds singing at least that far off. She was watching intently, when to her astonishment she saw the bird step out on the sill into the sunlight, and the next second it dashed away. It had escaped! With a gasp she watched it until it

TWO PRISONERS

rose above the housetops and disappeared far away in the depths of the blue sky.

When it had quite disappeared she looked back at the window. The two little figures were there as still as ever. There was no excitement. Could they have set the bird free on purpose? She gazed at them long and earnestly, then turned and looked back at the sky where the bird had faded from her view. It was deep and fathomless, without a speck. Her thoughts followed the lost bird—away over the housetops into the country, into the past, into the illimitable heavens. Her life was all spread out before her like a panorama. She saw a beautiful country of green fields, where lambs skipped and played; gardens filled with flowers, and orchards with clouds of bloom, where bees hummed all day long and birds sang in the leafy coverts. A little girl was playing there as free as the birds; as joyous as the lambs. In time the little girl grew to be a big girl. And one day a lad came up the country road and stopped at the gate and looked across at her. He was shy, but pleasant looking, and after a moment he opened the gate and came straight up to her and asked for lodging. He was un-

TWO PRISONERS

like any one else she had ever known. He had come from a State far away. He looked into her eyes, and she felt a sudden fear lest her father would not take him in. He was, however, given lodging, and he stayed on and on, and helped her father on the farm. He knew more than any one she had ever seen, and he bought her books and taught her. The girl's whole life seemed to open up under his influence, and in his presence. She used to wander with him through the pleasant woods; among the blossoms; in the moonlight; reading with him the books he brought her; finding new realms of which she had never dreamed. Then one evening he had leaned over, and put his arm around her and begun to speak as he had never spoken before. Her happiness was almost a pain, and yet it was only such pain as the bud must feel when the warm sun unfolds its petals and with its deep eyes seeks its fragrant heart. The young girl's life suddenly opened as that rose opens; and for a time she seemed to walk in paradise. Then clouds had gathered; talk of war disturbed the peace of her quiet life. Her lover was on one side, her father on the other. One day the storm burst. War came. Her husband felt that he must go. Her

TWO PRISONERS

father said that if she went with him she could never more come back. Her heart was torn asunder and yet she could not hesitate. Her place was with her husband. So she had parted from her father; she, half fainting with sorrow, he, white and broken, yet both sustained by the sense of duty. For a time there had been great happiness in a baby girl, who, though feeble, was the light of her eyes. The doctors said if she were taken care of she would outgrow her trouble. Then came a bitterer parting than the first; her husband went off to the war, leaving her a stranger in a strange land, with only her baby. Even this was not the worst. Shortly came the terrible tidings that her husband had been desperately wounded and left in the enemy's hands. She must go to him. She learned at the last moment that she could not take her child with her. Yet it was life or death. She must go. Then Providence had seemed to open the way. Unexpectedly she met an old friend; a woman who had been a servant of her mother's in the old days back at her old home. Though she had one weakness, one fault, she was good and kind, and she had always been devoted to her. She would take care of her child. So she left the little girl with her, to-

TWO PRISONERS

gether with the few pieces of jewelry she possessed. She herself set off to go through the lines to her husband. It was a long journey. In time she arrived at the place where he had been. But it was too late. He was gone. All that was left was an unmarked mound in a field of mounds. Since that time there had been for her nothing but graves. Just then the lines were closely drawn, and before she could get back through them she had heard from the woman that her child was dead of a pestilence that had broken out, and she herself dying. So she was left. In her loneliness she had turned to her father. She could go to him. He, too, was dead. The war had killed him. His property had melted away. The old home had passed from his hands and he himself had gone, one of the unnamed and unnumbered victims.

When at length the war had closed the widowed and childless woman had gone back to where she had left her child, to find at least its grave. But even this was denied her. There had been a pestilence, and in war so many are falling that a child's death makes no difference except to those who love it. The mother could not find even the grave to put a flower on.

Since that time she had lived alone—always

TWO PRISONERS

alone except for the memories of the past. Her gift with her needle enabled her to make enough to keep body and soul together. But her heart hungered for that it had lost.

Of late her memories had gone back much to her girlhood; when she had walked among the fruit trees with the lambs frisking and the birds singing about her. She had bought the mocking-bird to sing to her. It bore her back to the time when her lover had walked beside her; and there had been no thought of war, with its blood and its graves. She tried to blot out that dreadful time; to obliterate it from her memory; to bridge it over, except for the memory of her child—with its touch, its voice, its presence. Always that called her, and she prayed—if she only might find its grave.

For this she had come back once more to the place where she had left it, and where she knew its grave was. She had not found it; but had put flowers on many unmarked little mounds; and had blessed with her tender eyes many unknown little crippled children.

The mention of the crippled girl had opened her heart. And now when she lifted her head she was in some sort comforted. She rose and took up her bundle, and once more went down

TWO PRISONERS

into the street. She determined to go and see the little crippled child who had let her bird go.

She could not go, however, till next day, and when she went she learned that the child had been taken away by a rich lady and sent to a hospital. This was all the people she saw knew. She did not see Mrs. O'Meath.

VIII

AS soon as Molly could be moved she was taken from the hospital out to Mildred's country home. She had pined so to see the country that the doctors said it might start her towards recovery and would certainly do her good. So Mildred's mother had closed her town house earlier than usual and moved out before Easter.

From the very beginning it seemed to do her good. The fresh air and sunshine; the trees just putting on their spring apparel; the tender green grass; the flowers, and the orchards filled with bloom, all entranced her and invigorated her. She loved to be out of doors, to lie and look at the blue sky, with the great white clouds sailing away up in it (she said they were great snow islands that floated about in the blue air), and to listen to the songs of the birds flitting about in the shrubbery and trees. She said she felt just as that mocking-bird must have done that day when he stood in the warm sunshine

TWO PRISONERS

and saw the blue sky above him when he got out of prison. Mildred used to take her playthings and stay with her, and read to her out of her story books, whilst Roy would lie around and look lazy and contented. There was no place where he loved to sleep so well as on Molly's couch, snuggled up against her.

One afternoon she was lying on her couch out in the yard. Mildred was sitting by her, and Roy was asleep against her arm. It was Easter Sunday, and everything was unusually quiet and peaceful. There had been a good deal of talk about Easter. Molly did not know what Easter was, and she had been wondering all day. Mildred herself had mentioned it several times. She had a beautiful new dress, and Mrs. Johnson, the lady who had given her the mocking-bird, and for whom her mother had gotten a place, had made it. Still to Molly's mind this was not all that Easter meant. Molly had heard something about somebody coming back from the dead. This had set her to thinking all day. She knew about Sunday, because that day people did not go to work as on other days; and could not go into the barroom by the front door, and some of them went to church. But Easter was different. Something strange was

TWO PRISONERS

to happen. But nothing had happened. Mildred had been to church with her mother; but no one had come. Even the poor lady who had made Mildred's dress, and who had been invited to come out to the country and spend Easter, had not appeared; and had written that she could not come until the evening, if she could get off at all. So Molly was puzzled and a little disappointed. She had waited all day and no one had come. She must have misunderstood or else they had told her a lie. Now Mildred was sitting by her.

"Mildred," she said. Mildred leaned over her.

"Well, what is it?"

"Do you think my mother will know me when I get to Heaven? I was so little when she went away."

Mildred told her that a mother would know her child always. "Just so." This seemed to satisfy her.

A mocking-bird on a lilac bush began to sing. It sang until the air seemed to be filled with music.

"Molly," said Mildred, "I wonder if that is not your mocking-bird?" Molly's eyes turned slowly in that direction.

TWO PRISONERS

“I think maybe he went to Heaven that day, to my mother,” she said, softly.

“And told your mother that you set him free?”

Suddenly Molly spoke, slowly and softly.

“Mildred, I am very happy,” she said. “If I had all the money in the world, do you know what I would do with it?”

“No. What?” Mildred took her hand and leaned over her. She did not answer immediately. She was looking at the far away horizon beyond the blue hills, where the softly fading light was turning the sunset sky into a land of purple and gold. Presently she said:—

“I would buy up all the birds in the world that are in cages—every one—and set them free.” Mildred looked at her in vague wonder.

“Mildred, what is Easter?” she asked suddenly. Mildred was astonished. The idea of any one not knowing what Easter was!

“Why, Easter was the time when—” She paused to find just the word she wanted, and as it did not come to her mind she began to think what Easter really was. It was harder to explain than she had thought. Of course, she knew; but she just could not remember exactly all about it. “Oh! Yes—

TWO PRISONERS

“Why, Easter is the time when you have nice things—a new dress and don’t have to give up butter or candy, or any thing you want to eat—don’t you know?”

This was beyond Molly’s experience. She did not know. Mildred was not satisfied with her explanation. She added to it. “Why, it ’s the day Christ rose from the dead— Don’t you know?”

“Is that a fairy tale?” asked Molly.

“No, of course not; it ’s the truth.” Mildred looked much shocked. Molly looked a little disappointed.

“Oh! I was in hopes it was a fairy tale. Tell me about it.”

Mildred began, and told the story; at first in vague sentences merely to recall it to Molly’s memory, and then as she saw the interest of her hearer, in full detail with the graphic force of her own absolute belief. She had herself never before felt the reality of the story as she did now, with Molly’s eager eyes fastened on her face; her white face filled with wonder and earnestness, her thin hand holding hers, and at times clutching it until it almost hurt her. She began with the birth in the manger and ended with the rising in the garden.

TWO PRISONERS

“And did he sure ’nough come back—what you call rise again?” said Molly presently. Mildred nodded. She was still under the spell of Molly’s vivid realization of it.

“And where is He now?”

“He went back up to Heaven.” Mildred looked up in the sky. Molly too looked up and scanned the pale blue cloudless depths.

“Can He send back anybody he wants?”

Mildred thought so.

“Then I ’m going to ask Him to send back my mother to me,” she said. “I did not know about Him. I always asked God; but I never thought He would do it. I always thought He had too much to do to think about a poor little thing like me—except once. I asked Him not to let Mrs. O’Meath take Roy and He did n’t. But I never asked that other one. Maybe that ’s the reason He never did it before. He ’ll know about it and maybe He ’ll do it, because He was a little child too once, and He must know how bad I want her.” She ducked her head down, squeezed her eyes tightly, and remained so about two minutes.

This was a little too complicated for Mildred’s simple theology. She was puzzled; but she watched Molly with a vague, curious inter-

TWO PRISONERS

est. Molly opened her eyes and gazed up to the skies with an air of deep relief, not unmingled with curiosity.

“Now, I ’m going to see if He ’ll do it,” she said. “I ’ve asked Him real hard three times, and if He won’t do it for that I ain’t ever goin’ to ask Him no more.” Mildred felt shocked, but somehow Molly’s eagerness impressed her, and she too followed Molly’s gaze up into the deep ether, and sat in silence. Roy moved his head a little and licked Molly’s hand gently. The mocking-bird sang sweetly in the softening light. The only other sound was that of footsteps coming softly across the grass. Mildred, half turning, could see from where she sat. Her mother and another person, who, as she came near, Mildred saw was Mrs. Johnson, the poor woman who had given her the mocking-bird, were coming together. As they came nearer Mildred’s mother was just saying:

“This is the little girl who turned the bird loose.”

Molly was still watching the far off skies, too earnest to hear the new comers. Mrs. Johnson’s eyes fell on her. She stopped; started on again; stopped again, and drew her hand across her forehead, as if she were dreaming and try-

TWO PRISONERS

ing to awake. The next second with a cry she was down on her knees beside Molly's lounge, her arms around her.

"My baby—!"

The cripple lay quite still, gazing into her eyes with vague wonder. Then a sudden light seemed to fall across her face.

"Mother?" she whispered, with an awed inquiry in her tone. Then as she caught the look in the eyes fastened on hers the inquiry passed away and a deeper light seemed to illumine her face.

"Mother!" she cried.

THE END



